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SUPERNATURAL SEEMINGS

BY

HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D.

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PREFACE

THE aim of this edition is to present the argument of the book more clearly, fully, and, if it may be, conclusively than in the two previous editions. The text has therefore been revised throughout, modified and added to in parts, and mostly rewritten. A full index has also been added.

It will not be out of place to premise summarily two elementary truths, the grounds of which are found set forth at length in the general argument. Obvious as they might appear, it is strange to see how commonly they are ignored.

The first is that an attack on supernaturalism, however absolute, is not an attack on religion. Systems of theology are one thing—religion is another thing; and as the social progress of mankind implies such principles of binding morality as are essential religion, they have necessarily always existed and developed where that progress has taken place, whatever the fixed and exclusive tenets of the particular supernatural theory in vogue at the time and place: they belong to no creed exclusively. To look forward, as some persons wistfully do, to the discovery of a new religion is no wiser, perhaps, than it would be to look forward to the invention of a new multiplication-table. What is wanted really is not a new religion, but the power or will to see and acknowledge the principle, and trace the evolution, of the religion which has always been at work in the processes of what men are agreed to call human progress. Let them

aim to purify and simplify religion, since that religion is the best which is the most simple.

A second elementary truth is that the driving power of this human progress, individual or social, proceeds not, nor ever has proceeded, from the intellect. The motive impulse of action comes from the two fundamental feelings or instincts of human nature, whose fulfilment, whether directly in simple and material modes, or more remotely in abstract and complex mental modes, it is the function of reason to guide, regulate, and control; and so long as these feelings have force, so long will the individual go on aiming and striving, and so long will the progressing social body of which he is a unit feel and express the inherent organic propensity or nisus to rise to a higher level of social being. The roots of religion, therefore, are to be sought in the deep, permanent impulses of feeling which incite men to live and to grow into larger life, not in the changing theories of reason, which might conceivably make them doubt whether it was worth while to live at all.

The notion of an essential hostility between religion and science—between what a man feels he ought and what he knows he must do in order to do well—is no more reasonable than would be the notion of an essential hostility between his appetite and his understanding. Science has only been hostile to religion in so far as it has been hostile to the various supernaturalisms and ecclesiasticisms which have severally exploited and corrupted religion; while religion has seemed bitterly opposed to knowledge because these supernaturalisms and ecclesiasticisms, jealous to preserve their supernatural sanction and status, and strenuous to maintain their being, have furiously resisted every advance of knowledge which seemed to threaten them. Religion and science will continue to have their respective functions in human affairs: that of religion, inspired by the spirit of "charity" or love, to exert a moral

influence on action and bind men together in a growing unity and amity; that of knowledge, inspired by the spirit of enquiry, to find out the truth of things, and to teach them how to act best in relation to their surroundings, physical and human. There is no more antagonism between the two functions than there is between feeling and reason, which, though they may seem to conflict at times, cannot do without one another, and must work together inseparably in the process of human development, since reason without feeling could have nothing to act for and would be impotent to act, while feeling without reason would act tyrannically and blindly—that is to say, if either could exist and act at all without the other; for in the end it is not feeling nor reason, which acts, but it is the man who acts according as he feels and reasons.

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NATURAL CAUSES

AND

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THE ARGUMENT

MANY and divers are the notions that have been conceived of the supernatural by different peoples in different ages and places of the earth. From the beginnings of thought on it, when nature, having reached the stage of self-conscious reflection in man, began to wonder and ask about the whence, why, and whither of its way in the universe, there has been a succession of births and deaths of supernatural beings, of various forms and natures, to meddle in human affairs. Suited to the human conditions in which they were born and lived, they pined and died, one after another, when the changing conditions of thought were no longer fitted to sustain and maintain them. Extinct gods are pretty nigh as plentiful in history as extinct volcanos on earth. The rule being that those of one age and people were instinctively and deadly hostile to those of another age and people, it came to pass that the weaker gods of weak nations were worsted in the struggle for existence by the stronger gods of strong nations and eventually exterminated; sometimes, before extinction, suffering a degradation of rank into evil demons, to whom a few belated followers—faithful though few and year by year fewer, themselves perhaps subdued into slavery—continued to pay stealthy worship by secret rites in secret places. For as the conquerors made slaves of the conquered, so they made demons of their deities, stigmatizing the worship of them as base and

malignant superstition. Ill fares it with the pious beliefs of an age when they linger as survivals into an age which they suit not; like the wasted organs of extinct functions in the bodily economy, they are then superstitions—that is, obsolete survivances: the degenerate god like the degenerate relic of a third eye which the pineal gland of the brain has been pronounced to be.

An impartial and critical survey of these sequent travails of human transition might provoke the natural enquiry, Is there any supernatural at all? and if so, the further enquiry, Has mankind any means of access to it?

Supernatural existence in the sense of something beyond the natural with which human faculties, being the limited and shallow things they are, can come into relation is a manifest necessity of sane human thought. As the senses are only so many narrow chinks of experience between two unknown infinities, the infinitely great and the infinitely small, the knowledge which comes through them, necessarily informed by them, is at best but gleams of light in a surrounding darkness. It would not be light at all to any creature not similarly constituted. Even within the narrow range of sense-experience there is good reason to believe that man's senses cannot reveal to him all which the sensibilities of lower creatures in the animal scale reveal to them. Could an insect live a day had it not more subtile relations to the intimacies of its range of activity than he has apprehensions of? were it sensible only to the same kind and degrees of impressions which affect him? As it sees not what he sees and hears not what he hears, so doubtless it sees what he sees not and hears what he hears not—has differentiations of sense which render it capable of other and finer discriminations.

The very structure of a minute insect, if we well consider it, is effect and proof of more subtile sensibilities and reactions. How without them could so exquisitely neat and complex a structure ever have been built up by natural selection or any other selection? As its exceedingly fine, quick, and agile movements attest such nice conditions of function now, so the building up of the special form and structure which performs them implies the incorporation into fit form

of such fine reflex exercise in the past, being in literal sense an instruction or information through the ways of and according to the fashions of the senses. In the structure is the enfolded logic of which the function is the unfolded reason. Necessarily, therefore, when its special nervous system is stimulated to action by suitable impressions, the function of it is such instinct information or instruction made explicit in action, and necessarily too the creature can have no other information or instruction.

Think of the power and purpose concentrate in its minute nervous machinery. Man can hardly ever admire enough such mighty works of his inventive skill as the locomotive and the steamship, yet a little fly incorporates in its minute structure a more wonderful machinery by which it keeps pace with the locomotive in speed, and does more powerful and more intelligent work in proportion to its bulk. Meanwhile he cannot yet, with all his ingenuity, construct the clumsiest flying machine, though he take all kinds of matter for his material and square miles of space to work in. And what might the spider, the gossamer threads of whose exquisite web look almost as if woven of a sunbeam or a zephyr, think of the gross machinery which he needs in order to weave his comparatively coarse fabrics? If it be said that an all-powerful Artificer has designed and framed the exquisite structures, it is still a duty—imperative, though unheeded—to take note and thought of the fact that nature only does explicitly by human art through the human nervous system, in a comparatively coarse and clumsy way, what it has done before and is doing elsewhere now in a finer and more perfect way by insect's art through the insect's nervous system. Whencesoever the original impulse was derived, it is indisputable—and a wonderful thing to see, could custom-thralled eyes see the wonder there is in common things—that nervous structure, of its own motion, without need or help of mind, has taken intelligent and social developments on earth elsewhere than where ministering to human self-consciousness.

It is a conceit of man's egotism that his universe is the measure of every other creature's universe. For aught he knows, the universe, as it is within his experience, may be unlike

the universe as it is within other living experience, and no more like the universe outside his experience, which he cannot think, than the universe of a mite is like his universe. To the infinite little and great he is alike insensible. How estimate the possibilities of knowledge and power beyond his ken in regions of the infinitely minute? Imagination is so fettered by the usual conceptions of time and space that thought cannot even enter the subtilties of those regions. Compare the savage and the modern physician when in face of the horrible convulsions of tetanus: the one sees in them the work of an evil spirit, which he summons his medicine-man or witch-doctor to exorcize by monstrously absurd ceremonies and antics; the other sees in them the poisonous work of a minute organism and proceeds to employ the suitable antidote. The ignorant medicine-man prays to and propitiates what is to him the supernatural, being the unknown and awful; the learned medicine-man deals systematically with what to him is the natural, being the known and manageable; the people, when they see that he does natural work by natural means, leave off their wondering awe and transfer it along with the ceremonies and mysteries of the supernatural to the priest. Such the power which the knowledge of the minute workings of nature in a special case gives. But the distance between the knowledge and intelligent powers of the man of science, multiplied as they have been from age to age by the successive aids to sense which his ingenuity has devised, and the ignorant helplessness of the savage, who relies only on unaided sense, is as nothing compared with the larger knowledge and power which a revelation of the inconceivably minute might impart —a revelation, that is, of those infinite subtilties of nature which, like infinite magnitudes, are beyond his capacities of experience.

Little and casual is man's observation at the best. Had not the sun by setting withdrawn its veil of obscuring light, what would his knowledge of the stars have been? And were the veil of darkness which hides the operations of the infinitely little lifted suddenly, how limitless a world of new knowledge and power would be laid open! When science has learnt the mathematics and can manipulate the powers incorporate in the

structure of a fly it may be sure that its difficulties about making a flying machine will be at an end. To all men it is obvious that the part cannot comprehend the whole; and to all thinking men it must be obvious also that as the part is in necessary relation and connection with the whole—not an atom in the universe which is not in thrill of sympathy with the whole—the part itself can never be comprehended truly and fully except through a knowledge of the whole.* He who knows most of nature knows best how little is the most that is and can be known.

Supernatural existence, mighty or minute, in the sense of existence beyond the reach of human faculties may not be denied. But the term is used in quite different sense to mean, not that which is unknown and cannot be known, but a known supernatural world peopled by supernatural beings—gods and devils, good and evil spirits, the blessed souls of good men made perfect, and the damned souls of bad men left imperfect, with whom communication can be made by supernatural ways. Has man then ever had, and has he ever now, any such means of knowing the beings and events of such a world, however peopled, beyond the natural world? If he has not, how is it that so many people in so many times and places have believed that they had? If he has, how is it that there has been no agreement between the supernaturally inspired accounts given of its beings and doings, but that the stories have been as divers as the peoples, sometimes as gross and barbarous?

Surveying the matter calmly from a purely scientific point of view, two things are obvious: first, that those who say that nothing can be known of the supernatural ought to go to work to show how it has come to pass that so much has been known or misknown of it—to account as natural events for the many positive and precise beliefs concerning it; secondly, that those who profess to know what goes on in the supernatural world are bound to show how that knowledge has been obtained, to test and prove its authenticity, and to demonstrate finally and conclusively which of the different and opposed revelations is

* Is it not pretty evident that to understand a molecule thoroughly would be to understand the universe, and that a knowledge of the universe would be necessary in order to understand a molecule?

the true one. The enquiry, a purely scientific one, ought to be begun and prosecuted frankly in a candid spirit, entirely free from all prepossession by any theory of the supernatural; for to begin with a bias of that kind is infallibly to prejudge the problem and to vitiate the enquiry from the outset. Moreover, the presumption of any article of belief that it is absolutely and *à priori* true, if it be well considered, shows such a monstrous bias of human egoism that it must render him who holds it incapable, however great his goodwill, of looking at himself as he is in just relations to things as they are. By magnifying himself thus mightily out of ratio at the outset, how can his course of thought thenceforth be truly rational? What he does really is to begin with an *a priori* truth which assumes implicitly that which he undertakes to prove *a posteriori*; wherefore his agile and subtile exercises within the bounds of a foregone conclusion, albeit masked under the name of a necessary postulate, are much like the movements of a squirrel in a cage, and notwithstanding their dialectic nimbleness, in the end as profitless for anything but self-exercise.

Rebelling against past revelations of the supernatural, so diverse, contradictory, and sometimes preposterous as they are, reason yet may not conclude off-hand that every process of getting into relations with it is discredited as no better than either folly or fraud. Its proper business is to find out how far such notions have sprung from natural defects and infirmities in the workings of the human mind, and what if ever so little measure of truth there peradventure is in them. Is there still left a valid residue of supernatural illumination, notwithstanding its steady shrinkage from day to day, as its defenders fail not stoutly to maintain when forced to abandon one position after another in sullen retreat? Is the belief in false Christs, false miracles, false omens—as the argument sometimes is—proof of a true Christ, of true miracles, of true omens? Or is it a case in which the various notions may be shown to own causes of error that work habitually in human thought now and wrought more largely in its infancy? Should it turn out, when subtraction has been made of all those possible causes of error, when in fact all sources of folly have been eliminated, that there is nothing left to account for, or

only so much as may easily be due to fraud, then the problem will manifestly have been put in a more simple and direct way of solution.

In pursuit of this much-needed enquiry, How it has come to pass that men have been able to think so many things about that which lies beyond the reach of thought? I propose to set forth the chief causes of error in thinking which might lead, and have largely led, to wrong theories of the supernatural, classifying them under three headings:—

I. Those which belong to the natural operations of mind and may be included in two principal classes, namely,

1. The natural defects and errors of observation and reasoning.
2. The prolific activity of imagination.

II. Those which belong to the operations of unsound mind and fall naturally under the two headings of

1. Hallucinations and illusions.
2. Mania and delusions.

III. Those which belong to the extraordinary workings of mind rapt in ecstasies or transports of feeling and imagination, and are thought to mark intuition raised to its highest power of illumination; a state of mind which, being deemed more than ordinarily mental, is styled *spiritual*.

As the domain of the supernatural has shrunk immensely in modern times, since men applied themselves to the scientific study of natural phenomena, it is plainly a duty to find out the reason why. Has the supernatural come step by step, in proportion as knowledge grew, actually to take less and less part in the affairs of the visible universe, receding in distance as the demand for it abated? Have miracles in fact ceased, so quietly too that no one can tell when the last happened or even whether the last has yet happened, because miracles, necessary to nurse religion in its infancy, are no longer needed to teach men how to believe and act in the world? Or has the shrinkage of the supernatural been due to the steadily progressing discovery of natural causes and the modes of their workings in events which were once attributed to supernatural interventions? And are miracles therefore at an end because they happen only to the ignorant and are exploded as fables by

the wise? If nature has become more natural in proportion as men have come to know it more—as it indisputably has done—the relics of the supernatural in modern belief may be due to the fact that causes of wrong thinking, once at work widely, still work in the old way in many minds in regard to some subjects.

It is directly contrary to the scientific spirit to endorse the principle of the theological dogma, that God forsakes those who doubt Him, because of their hardness of heart, and therefore works miracles for believers only; that is to say, for those only who are in no need of their convincing help, not for those whom their testimony might convince and save. To ascribe the want of a belief in God to the want of a desire to believe, and the want of a desire to believe to a native hardness of heart, however approved a principle of theology, is quite inconsistent with the fundamental principle of scientific method; which is not to postulate a prepared ground of desire, but rigorously to ban any such bias of desire in order to ensure true observation and right judgment. Science shrinks not from setting forth its proofs in presence of unbelief; it distrusts deeply the proofs expected by belief.

After all, the question of the supernatural in natural things is merely a subjective business—at bottom a question of the value of human thought and feeling; not of the nature of existence in itself, but of what men think about it; not of the *thing-in-self*, but of the *think*. And that is necessarily natural, being in the end always human thinking and feeling, however it has come about—whether by elaborate steps of observation and reason, or as a quickening and illuminating intuition from somewhere beyond their reach. The supernature which reveals itself through man must still be nature. Does it ever so reveal itself through his nature as thus to become natural knowledge? Is the human mind ever transported temporarily out of its natural self by a supernatural process of illumination so as to gain, by instantaneous infusion, in a flash of insight, and to retain when retranslated into self, what it could never get by the natural functions of sense and understanding? Can more be got out of it supernaturally, in feeling or thought, than has been put into it naturally?

PART I.

COMMON FALLACIES OF THE SOUND MIND.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING.

§ *Uniformities of Experience.*

WERE a simple-minded rustic asked how he is sure that from one kind of seed, when put into the ground, will spring up one kind of plant, and from another kind of seed another kind of plant, he might answer, if he deigned to answer at all, that any fool who knows one seed from another knows that much. It would be a rude but forcible statement of the truth that even a fool fails not to notice so common and constant a succession of events. In like manner, were the astronomer asked how it is that he can foretell the events of the heavens at such immense distances of space and time, he might say, if not prompted by scientific vanity to magnify and make a mystery of his calling, that every astronomer who knows his business can do it, and cannot help doing it, as well as he can. In either case the reasoned inference rests upon uniformity of experience, on the conviction that what has been is that which shall be in the order of nature, and in neither case has it any authority other than experience: not individual experience alone, it may be, but the slowly gained and capitalized experience of the race embodied now in the general statement of the uniform experience—that is, in the so-called law of nature. For that is all which a law of nature is really: no active power compelling things to go in the way they do and keeping them in it, nothing else but the generalization of experience—that is, the simplest description possible in general terms, just the general statement, that things in respect of which it is made have the uniform course they have.

So long as the order of nature is what it is, so long must men, constituted as they are, look for co-existences and sequences to be in time to come as they have been in time past. So long, too, will they be prone, in consequence of faulty observation and hasty inference, to make mistakes by supposing connections of things which are common but not constant, perhaps occasional only, to be invariable and necessary—by concluding casual to be causal events. The more stupid the individual the less evidence does he then need for his conclusion, the more sure he is of it, the blinder is he to its disproof, the more foolish are the mistakes which he makes. If he has once broken a mirror, or spilt salt on the table-cloth, or sat down to dinner in a company of thirteen, when some misfortune followed, he goes on believing to the end of his life that he cannot break a mirror, or spill salt on the table-cloth, or sit down thirteen to dinner, without bringing inevitable ill luck. He may be vastly comforted if, after the untoward event, he can think to break the spell of the ill omen by immediately invoking, to cancel it, another omen, equally absurd, which is reputed to be of auspicious import.

It is hard to *conceive*, harder still to *believe*, a contradiction of uniform experience. If two things or events always go along together they are inevitably thought of together, and thereupon believed to be bound together by an inviolate tie, not in the mind only, but in the nature of things. In mind it could not be otherwise. So, too, might it be in nature were the human mind commensurate with the universe and all its workings in mass and molecule, if, being omnisensible and omniscient, its uniform were universal experience; but as that is not so, nor ever likely to be so, knowledge being limited to a narrow chink of light between two infinities of darkness and necessarily at best as shallow as narrow, the mental tie may or may not mean a tie of things. Occasions of error present themselves at every turn. A wider experience and larger reason may prove the apparently invariable to be really a variable association. All swans were believed to be white until a black swan was seen for the first time in Australia; "swan" and whiteness being two notions that

went together inseparably. Once it was incredible, nay inconceivable, that there could be people at the Antipodes, because if there were they would have to walk with their heads downwards, like flies on a ceiling; and to many persons it is still inconceivable that a body in motion would go on moving at the same speed for ever if it were not acted upon by some other force to stop it. The right use of a contradictory instance in reasoning is to correct the erroneous generalization by proving that it is not really general, and thereby to bring the order of thought into agreement with the order of nature.

But the contradictory experience fails often to refute the wrong conclusion. That is the pregnant fault which gives birth to frequent fallacy of reasoning. Once the opinion is universally accepted, handed down by tradition, ingrained in habit of thought, it is so incorporate in the mental nature as to be invested with an authority greater than experience has given or could ever give; it acquires a kind of sacred sanction which it is thought impious to question. Like the instinct of the animal, fashioned and fixed through the ages, it is a very principle of the mental structure. Reverenced rightly at first for its use as a necessary bond of social continuity and unity, it is over-reverenced in the end as a religion, and invested with the privilege of sanctuary from criticism; then it survives in spite of contradictory experience, is literally a superstition. A mortal belief is endowed with an immortal prerogative. Because it is not of individual acquisition it is thought to be not of mortal acquisition; the real source of its higher authority in the experience of the kind is overlooked, being sought outside humanity, and men do unwittingly what the disciples of Auguste Comte would have the world do wittingly—namely, deify the humanity which has done it.* All too prone is the belief itself, once

* Such the more abstract form which Comtists would have the concrete worship of ancestors to take. So far well perhaps; but is not evolving humanity after all effect and instrument of deeper inspiring force? Why not go further back to worship the force which makes humanity and makes it evolve? A survey of man's past and present savage, murderous, cruel, and bloody doings on earth might necessitate the inference and warrant the imagination of a more cosmic, if not more moral power, than Humanity, even when spelt with a capital letter..

it is incorporate in a fashion of thought, to resent its real origin and to repudiate the humble ladder of experience by the steps of which it rose to its abstract dignity.

Another reason which no doubt helps to prevent the refuting contradiction from cancelling the wrong conclusion is the common dictum, so commonly misunderstood, that the exception proves the rule. When the exception proves the rule it is not in the sense of justifying and establishing it, but in the sense of probing and testing it, and thus, when the exception is a true one, of disproving it: not a case of proving a wrong theory of uniformity by the exception, but of disproving it by the probing instance which the exception is. To a true generalization it is impossible there should be a true exception. How could it be general if there were? The element of prudent truth in the popular saying, if we consider it well, is a tacit acknowledgment of the fallibility of human generalizations and an implied caution not to base rules of practice too absolutely on them in human affairs. Of two or three laws of nature we may perhaps be absolutely sure that they are absolutely true for human nature, constituted as it is; but is there any law of human nature of which we can have that absolute certitude? In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the rule may suit, but the hundredth case may be a variation which it will not suit; the uniform still not the universal experience. Compromise, not pursuit of a supposed principle rigorously to its extremity —when it would most likely touch its opposite—is often the safest procedure in the complexities and uncertainties of social and political affairs: not the French, Is it logical? but the English, Will it work? What virtue is there which, carried to an excess, does not become a vice?*

Why is human nature hostile to new thought and action? Because it is new, and being new agrees not with the old. How can the old mental nature like and welcome that which disagrees with and, therefore, is a dislike to it? In face of the novel experience which it is unable to apprehend and deal with definitely, mind is perplexed and powerless in the first instance,

* Extremes meet, even Heaven and Hell being in close proximity; for if they were not in touch, how could Dives in Hell have talked with father Abraham in Heaven?

for the impression is devoid of any connections with its existing ideas; it cannot help staggering for a while in giddy confusion. For that which it has uniformly felt and thought and adjusted itself to becomes a constituent part of its structure, a second nature, to go against which is to go against nature—if invariable within human experience, a fundamental form of thought and the negation of it inconceivable; wherefore to change or reverse a constant experience, above all, to introduce a new and strange experience, is to sever the mental hold on things, to wrench it from reality for the moment, and to occasion a commotion of distress—either an impatient embarrassment, if it be a small thing, or a bewilderment and reeling of mind, a feeling as of impending mental dissolution, if it be a big thing. There is no peace then until either the new thing be ignored or a new mental adjustment to it be organized.

It is with beliefs as it is with movements. The right belief, like the right movement, is that which has been acquired or organized by the fit adaptation to former like circumstances; true now, therefore, if present circumstances are essentially like, untrue if they are essentially unlike. A uniformity of belief signifies in fact a uniformity of acquired mental structure; a structure which will then function necessarily in the belief which has informed it and it now represents. The relation is as purely organic and necessary as that which exists between a special purposive movement and its special nervous reflex. To require anybody in a particular case to believe otherwise than according to his uniform experience of it is much like requiring a skilful movement of the body serving a special end, and gained at great pains by fit training, to perform off-hand a quite different act which it is physically impossible it could do—is virtually to ask a particular purposive movement to be other than what it is.

If a belief, like a movement, be faulty and unfit for its purpose it must still serve, however clumsily and imperfectly, until a fit one can be formed. No one can help using old beliefs for the mental apprehensions of new facts, if he apply himself to believe anything of them at all, any more than he can help using, in order to grasp hold of a quite new object, the

most fit motor apprehension of which he is capable, though it is not perfectly fit, until he has provided himself with a better. To do that he properly goes on to modify by gradual adaptation the old belief in face of the new facts which it does not suit exactly, adding to it where it errs by falling short of the facts, subtracting from it where it is in excess of them, and adjusting suitably its factors. Now, as that is a process which costs pains and patience it is perforce more painful than pleasant; for a belief, like every living thing, resists or evades attack and dislikes dismemberment. To dissociate two ideas that have always gone together in experience is as hard a matter of patient and persistent pains as to dissociate two movements that have always been associated in practice. All too prone therefore is the prejudiced mind—the mind preinformed, that is, to a prejudgment—to shirk and despise the novel experience which necessitates the painful process.

If an entire change of circumstances renders a belief utterly unfit to function in them, then it may be the occasion of much evil, either from omission because it is paralyzed and cannot act at all in them when action is necessary, or from commission because it acts convulsively and unfitly in them. It might be likened to a reflex movement which, serving the natural discharge of a secretion or excretion along its proper channel, either becomes the spasmodic occasion of a violent pain when the channel is obstructed, and a torturing agony when it is blocked, or is paralyzed altogether by the obstruction.

Belief is notoriously so much a custom of nature and nothing more in the great majority of men that they can no more think a new belief befitting new circumstances, or correct an old belief not fitting them, than they can speak a foreign language of which they know nothing. That is not entirely an evil on earth; organically fashioned machines which have to do their mechanical work in the world, they are often better instruments for their humble functions than they would be if they were endowed with less servility and more plasticity of mind. One cannot conceive that it would make for the cohesion and stability of a society of ants if the creatures were plastic to new susceptibilities and uses instead of being fast fixed in form and function; on the contrary, it is pretty certain that

the individual would not do its work by any variation it chanced then to make as well as it does now automatically, and might soon upset the social fabric by its novel impulses. In respect of the custom of belief, uncultivated persons everywhere behave in a like mechanical way to ants; they differ but little from savages, the signal features of whose minds are a dull and apathetic indifference, an incapacity to take in new ideas, a tenacious cleaving to accepted belief and customs which, being the wisdom of their forefathers, whose *manes* they perhaps worship, they regard as of the order of nature not conceivably to be questioned.* The habit of mind no doubt makes for the repose of the individual and the stability of a people; a coarse mental machinery is suited to its environment and works fitly in it; but the habit is none the less fatal to mental progress, which takes place only by putting off old beliefs when they have been found wanting, and putting on new beliefs in conformity with new observation and reflection. Were any curious person of competent capacity, by way of philosophical experiment, to go about to dissociate his habitual mental experiences, out of doubt he would see many things in a new light, would see some things which he had been previously blind to, and in the end might make some surprising and instructive discoveries. A good effect of wide experience of men and things, and of a wise and large mental culture, is to

* A very early, if not original, worship of mankind is still practised at the present day. In Java is a tribe called the *Karangs*, supposed to be descendants of the aborigines of the island, whose old men and youths four times a year repair secretly in procession, by paths known only to themselves, to a sacred grove in the dense forest; the old men to worship and make offering, the youths to see and learn the mysterious litany of their fathers. In this grove are the ruins of terraces laid out in quadrilateral enclosures, the boundaries of which are marked by blocks of stone laid or fixed in the ground. Here and there on the terraces are more prominent monuments—erect pillars surmounting oval piles of stones; flat slabs on the ground supporting egg-shaped blocks; and, specially noteworthy, a pillar, erect within a square marked out with stones on the ground, round which the worshippers plait at every visit a fringe of Areng palm leaves. Here these despised and secluded people, following the rites and customs that have descended to them through their forefathers from vastly remote antiquity, continue to celebrate what are evidently phallic rites of worship, repeating with superstitious awe a litany which they do not comprehend, and whose origin and purpose are lost to their traditions. FORBES's *Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 101.

emancipate the mind from the bondage of custom and to open the way to impressions which may modify, perhaps overthrow, old conceptions; then when the new thing presents itself it is not impatiently rejected, nor relegated hastily to a category which fits it not, but is closely heeded, quietly reflected on, and duly sorted or assimilated. The organic structuralization of brain thus effected and represented by such right attention and classification is nothing else but materialized intelligence. Every manifestation of mind implies such structuralization in the past and needs it in the present.

Two things are evident: first, how necessary a thing constancy of belief is to give stability and cohesion to the social structure; secondly, how necessary it is that belief change with widening experience, in order to ensure growth and developments. A weight of heavy stupidity behind is of good use to counterbalance centrifugal flights of fanaticism in front, a firm anchorage in the past necessary for those who are witless when loosed from it. For it would not be well for the mass of mankind to be so susceptible to new impulses as easily to change their beliefs; it is better for the steady and prosaic progress of the world that they do not; but it is a necessary condition of progress, for it is the effect and evidence of a living spirit of development in a people, that there be individuals in it who are capable of variation and apt, therefore, to start and lead new lines of progress. Like all tendencies, the tendency to stand still on the old ways of belief and the tendency to go forward on new paths may be carried to excess and then become evils. The way of sound evolution plainly lies in the mean—in avoidance alike of the stagnant corruption of inert conservatism and of the rash changes of violent revolution. The living molecule itself, what is it but a mean between two antagonisms?

Organization being a gradual process, and belief an organic process or growth, every system of belief, like every organic growth, has its time and season; it cannot spring up out of season or grow to maturity in less than its proper time. If it has taken mankind ten thousand years to make one ten-thousandth part of their progress, as it probably has, what can be more preposterously foolish than to expect them suddenly

to put on a new nature and to start the millennium? Yet people who would think it idiotic to expect a tree to grow up in a week, or to bear fruit in mid-winter, are enthusiastic enough to persuade themselves that a belief can spring up like a mushroom in a night, or grow on an organic stock foreign to it, or flourish in soil and season fatal to it.

How firmly the belief of uniformity is built into the mental structure, so as to become a constituent pillar of it, is shown in a striking manner by the bewildering effects which an unexpected change or reversal of the constant experience produces. The unforeseen event, when it is on a grand scale, stuns and bewilders the mind, leaving it to reel wildly in the void until a new mental adjustment is formed. Anarchy within reflects the seeming anarchy without: astonied awe expresses the spasmodic ecstasy of a quasi-dislocated cerebral track. Hence it is that an earthquake, going counter to all ordinary experience, causes an extraordinary and indescribable feeling of alarm and mental impotence in countries where it is a rare event; and it was for the same reason, doubtless, that comets and eclipses in past times produced overwhelming terror everywhere, as they do still among some barbarous peoples, being thought to bode unknown calamities. In young children terrified at the first sight of a black man, and in animals thrown into panic of alarm by the sudden encounter of a strange object, we have examples of similar mental helplessness produced by an unexpected breach of uniformity of experience. The horse which bolts in fright at the novel sight of a tame bear on the highway exhibits the same sort of mental panic which a man does who recoils in horror, without examining it, from an argument offending his dearest religious conviction.

In the ties of mind to the conditions of its medium, and in its regular habits of function in relation to them, we see again the probable reason why a nation goes madly astray with panic of fear and rage of suspicion when its social framework falls to pieces, as happened in France during the storm of its great revolution. Left then unattached, its social medium dissolved, without external hold and stay, the unsupported mind

flutters and falls wildly in the void, as it were, much as a bird might do if a rarefying atmosphere failed to support its flight.

Because the external factors of circumstances and the internal factors of mind both enter constituently into its habits of mental function, therefore the same kind of bewildering panic is produced when the internal factor goes to pieces by reason of such a disorganization of its structure as ensues when the external factors are dissolved. The sufferer from morbid mental depression, whose disordered brain is struck with a painful palsy of function, finds his thoughts and feelings reel in an alarming impotence; he is oppressed with a wretched sense of loss of hold on realities, which now pass before him remotely like shadows, not substantial things; with a frightened feeling of the dissolution of his personality, which is incapable of any function but despair; with a panic-like dread of formless woes, all the more overwhelming because they are inapprehensible. The familiar world of his experience is a strange disconcerting and bewildering world to him because he is a strange, disconcerted, and bewildered being in it: he cannot so lay hold of as to grasp its objects, cannot apprehend them. Whoever would truly realize how indispensable are the habitual definite relations between the internal fabric of mind and the external framework, social and physical, of the environment, could not do better than listen to the morbid melancholic as he struggles vainly with the inadequacy of language to express his appalling sense of the unreality of things and the disabling apprehensions which the strangeness of his own mental being causes him.

Manifestly the completest repose of being would lie in the completest adjustment of mind to medium, social and physical. A constant round of uniformities of experience could leave no room for disturbing passions and their feverish activities: no unsatisfied desires, no unfulfilled instinct, no potentiality craving to be actuality, no impression which did not find adequate expression, no progress of desire urging a restless desire to progress. That is a peaceful state of things which, when it is met with in any society of human beings, is not

usually thought to mark a high level of human development; on the contrary, it is viewed with contempt as something rather of low order, animal-like, wanting the lofty aspirations and impulses to rise to a higher being which men feel to be heaven-born and immortal in themselves. Were the human mind ever to attain to a complete understanding with its environment, exhausting the potentialities of knowledge, so perfect an equilibrium of self and not-self in which desire was extinct would be pretty well tantamount to the abolition of self and not-self; it would be a repose so complete as to be stagnation and death. Man's prerogative is his divine discontent; hitherto he has seen in it the stimulus to recover the Eden which he has lost. Life is only life while it is a struggle to be, against the forces with which it must struggle in order to be; it is nature in one form of being striving to maintain and increase itself at the cost of nature in other forms of being—still in obedience to natural laws, themselves included within a larger order of nature which ultimately disposes of them. Life in mind differs not in this respect from life in general; it must strive in order not to decline, must increase in order not to decrease. So long as the nisus of evolution works in nature to accomplish the becoming of things, so long will it be the fate of organic matter—the edict of its destiny—to take on in their due seasons new and more complex incarnations, manifesting their impulses of being in desires and endeavours for new and higher beliefs.

In the individual this instigating productive energy ought rightly to maintain a certain stable mean; for if it is in defect, the sure consequences are stagnation in bonds of old belief and eventual corruption; if in excess, its struggle to go beyond the conditions of its material embodiment, and to attain to a sort of exalted spiritual detachment, ends in a delirium or ecstasy, which is mental disruption. A futile and convulsive mental strain to overbe then translates itself into transports of unruly imagination which, emancipated entirely from the bonds of reason, take leave of the very basis of experience.

§ *Sanctification of Error as Superstition.*

A great cause, then, of ordinary errors of thought, and of ordinary errors that have obtained extraordinary sanctity as superstitions, is an unfounded belief in instances of uniformity which are not really such, and the survival or persistence of such errors in beliefs and customs after they are or ought to be discredited by observation. It is an inference from the particular fact to the general conclusion when the induction is not warranted by experience, and the subsequent perpetuation of it as sacred in spite of sense and reason. The things which, when they went together before, were followed by good luck, will, when they go together again, bring good luck after them, and a day on which a misfortune has befallen becomes an unlucky day. The repugnance is still strong, and in former days there was a religious prohibition, against commencing important business on the unlucky day. In reality there may be no more connection between the two events than there is between an eclipse of the sun and the birth of a red-haired child which chances to take place during it, or between the flaming of a comet in the heavens and the career of a great conqueror or a great criminal who is born under that aspect of them. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since Ovid referred to the vulgar objection of the Romans to marriages in May, the probable reason of the aversion being that the funeral rites of the Lemuralia were celebrated in that month; but the superstition is still not extinct, for marriages in May are thought by many to be unlucky now. How vivid and piercing a ray of light does the fact throw into the persistence, for good or ill, of past, be it never so remote, in present human thought and feeling! Man shudders instinctively at an incorporate superstition, very much as the domestic animal shudders at the smell of a savage animal which neither it nor any ancestor of it for ages past has seen.

The priests of ancient Rome, making their profit out of this omen-seeking habit of mind, as the medicine-men of savage tribes do still, sought and, seeking, found in the entrails of the animals offered up as sacrifices to the gods the signs propitious or unpropitious to the enterprise about to be undertaken; and

the derivation of omens from the flights of birds was developed into an elaborate science, feeble survivals of which are found in the superstitions that still linger in remote country villages as to the good or ill luck portended by flights of magpies. How little truth of observation was at the bottom of omens of the kind, widespread and hallowed as they were amongst all sorts of people in all quarters of the earth, is shown clearly by the fact that the same event which was an omen of ill luck in one nation might be an omen of good fortune in another nation, and that the same bird might presage good or bad fortune according as it was to the right or the left of the person who chanced to see it.*

When prayers were made daily to saints in Christendom, with deeper sense of reality and a more vital belief in their efficacy than exists now, or than a modern nature can feel in the modern atmosphere of thought, one saint was invoked as specially propitious to one person or one class of persons, and another saint to another person or another class of persons; whence it did not fail sometimes to happen that the saint who was the patron of one was hostile to another when the interests of the two conflicted.† Having prayed once to a particular saint and received what he prayed for, the suppliant was persuaded that he got it in consequence of his prayer, and ever afterwards invoked that saint with heart of good hope, notwithstanding that on a hundred other occasions he did not get what he prayed for. In some Roman Catholic churches at the present day the walls inside are covered with the votive tablets of those who, having prayed to the Virgin or to a favourite saint for the recovery of a mother, child, sister, brother, father, or lover, from sickness, have thus recorded their gratitude for the favourable answer which the event has

* Of these ways of divining the divine purpose—the so-called *divinations*—the silliest have died and been forgotten. It is hardly credible now, for example, that the cry of the cuckoo heard at the back-door of a man's house was once thought to portend that he would certainly be made a cuckold.

† It was to make sure of their aid that the Lacedæmonians, according to Xenophon, put up their prayers very early in the morning, in order to be beforehand with their enemies and to pre-engage the gods in their favour.

been.* And so in English churches still, when the country is suffering damage from the long continuance of wet weather, so that the harvest cannot be gathered in, and the farmer looks round him in despair at the rain which continues to fall, special prayer is made solemnly to Almighty God, that He may turn from the people those evils which they for their sins have most righteously deserved, by sending fine weather. If fine weather comes at length after the long spell of wet weather, it is a manifest and merciful answer to prayer; if not, the credit of prayer nowise suffers by its ill success on the occasion. The true prayer of trust is the pathetic prayer of abject resignation—"Not my will, but Thine be done"; yea, Thy will be done though in my undoing. †

§ *Fallacies of Coincidence in Reasoning.*

It might naturally be thought that people of all countries in all ages would not have offered sacrifices and supplications to their gods had not the events often answered the expectations of those who were at the cost and pains of offering them. Propitiatory hecatombs of slain creatures, human and animal, offered up in countless numbers on countless altars in all parts of the world, are they not proof of the existence of gods who have inclined their ears to hear the urgent prayers of mankind? Not so; since the many gods that were thus invoked and propitiated with costly rites and ceremonies amid the reverential awe of their adoring worshippers are now confessed to have had no existence outside human imagination, and not ever therefore to have answered the prayers they were believed to answer at the time. Their present interest is as extinct beliefs, not as extinct beings.

* And not in Christian churches only. Of a Buddhist temple in the province of Shansi, in China, to which the neighbouring Mongols make pilgrimages in numbers, Mr. Gilmour says, "It seemed to be quite a famous temple, and was hung almost full of its own praises, written on red cloth and silk, the grateful offerings of votaries, who in this way returned thanks for having their prayers answered." (*Among the Mongols*, p. 144, by the Rev. James Gilmour, M.A.) All which naturally seemed very absurd and barbarous to a missionary who believed himself the organ of the only true religion.

† Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*.

Why, then, were they thought to answer prayers? In the main, perhaps, for a reason which still works strongly as a cause of error in reasoning—namely, the well-known tendency of the mind, so much insisted on by Bacon, to be impressed vividly by agreeing instances and to remember them, while overlooking and forgetting the opposing instances. But for it the prodigies and prophecies which have heralded the ruins of great states and great persons, as well as such comfortable opinions as that "murder will out," that "truth will prevail," and the like, would have long since lost their credit. It is obvious that those who see proof of the power and goodwill of the gods when they look round on the numerous votive tablets which are so many records of their benevolent interpositions in human affairs, do not think or care to ask themselves where the votive tablets are of the vastly greater number of persons who received no answers to their prayers. When the wicked man, not turning away from his wickedness, is struck down in the height of his evil prosperity, a sad spectacle of social and moral ruin, many good people behold with pleasing awe the special judgment of Heaven in the event; but they do not take notice of a special Providence in the event when the wicked man flourishes on the fruits of his iniquity, or when the good man's life, in the height of its beneficent activity, prematurely ends in the protracted agonies of a torturing disease.

So it was with the astrologers of old, who, noting the fortunes of persons born when a particular constellation was in the ascendant, professed to predict the fortunes of those born under the same celestial auspices, although one of two persons born at the same instant might become a prince and the other a beggar, and were never a whit shaken in their pretensions and authority by the multitude of their failures. So it is with the fortune-teller of to-day, who imposes on the credulity of the ignorant by the authority of some remarkable instance or instances in which his prediction was verified by the event. So in a signal manner has it been with the observation and use of dreams; for it has not only been a common saying that dreams come true, but the opposite saying that dreams go by contraries has also had its vogue. Always the remembrances

of the hits stand out vividly, while the misses fade into oblivion.*

When we call to mind how many dreams are dreamt every night, most of them related to the interests and fortunes of the individual, since dreams take form and colour from his nature and experiences, and what a multitude of events happen in a day, it would be strange were there not occasional coincidences between the dream and its fulfilment. In the same way, he who reflects how many prayers are uttered in a day, most of them related to the immediate interests and concerns of the individual, and what a multitude of events happen in a day, will not wonder at, or conclude much from, the occasional coincidence between the prayer and its answer. A person naturally prays for what he wants, and may well happen in a certain proportion of cases to get, directly or indirectly, in the natural changes and chances of events among which his fortunes lie; and the fact that he does get it sometimes is not enough, therefore, to warrant the conclusion that it comes by supernatural intervention—all the less so when sympathetic friends, able to help him in natural ways, know what he wants and prays for. Most persons are ill more than once before they fall ill of the sickness of which they die; and if prayers are made for their recoveries on all these occasions of illness, there must in the nature of things be more favourable than unfavourable answers.

He who perceives a divine verdict in the event, whatever it be, is guilty of the presumption rebuked by Jesus Christ in the eager discoverers of a divine judgment on the sinners upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. The truly pious believer fails not to perceive the divine verdict in every case, and may justly accuse the little faith which, not receiving the benefit asked for in prayer, but receiving instead the evil specially deprecated, fails to see therein the true answer to the prayer and the right proof of its efficacy. How faithless

* It was an ancient opinion that there were two gates of sleep, out of one of which went false dreams, and out of the other true ones—

"Sunt geminæ somni portæ, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, quâ veris facilis datur exitus umbris;
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
Sed falsa ad cœlum mittunt insomnia manes."

the faith which finds unanswered prayer in the execrated event!

Were a curious collection made of all the various omens that have been in repute among different nations and in different times, in order to find out whether the greater number of them were believed to portend good fortune or misfortune, without doubt the ill omens would preponderate largely over the good omens, just as the demons and evil spirits have preponderated over the benevolent fairies and the good spirits. The obvious reason is that the omens foreboding ill have obtained more credit because of their more frequent fulfilment, misfortunes and misery being more common in the world than good fortune and blessings, however optimists may pretend differently. Friday still has a bad pre-eminence as an unlucky day, not because it is really more unlucky than another day, but because any day of the week on which attentive note was taken, through a long succession of experiences, of the events happening on it would have a preponderance of ills; a proof of this being that, in the opinion of some persons, Monday is an unlucky day on which to begin a new enterprise. Omens of good fortune, being more often discredited by the event, would be limited to comparatively rare occurrences and sequences. A like particular attention is no doubt the main reason of the saying that misfortunes never come singly; they come plentifully at all times, but are uncounted except when the mind is tuned by some special mood of gloom to take note of them. However bright, then, the ideal theory of human life, its deep basic sadness beneath a jubilant show is acknowledged practically by the instinctive experience of the race; it is implied also in the central thought which is at the heart of all religions, in the invention of a future life to redress the calamities of this life, and in the hearty thanks which devout Christians give to Almighty God when it has pleased Him to deliver a brother or sister from the miseries of this sinful world.*

Presentiments, omens, auguries, telepathic chimings of distant thought, monitory dreams, and like vague adumbrations of mysterious and ineffable relations between men and things,

* See prayer in Burial Service of Church of England.

which mystical minds admire with awe as symbols of truth too deep for reach of definite intellectual apprehension, will all be found, when critically examined, to owe their credit in the main, if not entirely, to crude observation and bad reasoning. At any rate, the indistinct and shadowy relations which such minds perceive, or feel vaguely rather than perceive, are not necessarily proofs of superfine insight into things; they certainly often betray the visionary vagrancy of the indolent and self-indulgent mind which, shirking the labour of clear and precise thinking, delights to drift in a vagabondage of misty feeling and shadowy thought. The mystical intimations are not then sublime because they are obscure; they are obscure because, phantom-like, they love the twilight and shrink from facing the light of thought.

It is not to be denied that an undefined foreboding of evil, a deep and tragical presentiment, sometimes in a person's life goes before a calamity which was not foreseen, not even dimly anticipated. Such dark premonition, when fulfilled by the event, is a circumstance well suited to beget the opinion of a supernatural intimation. The cases in which it occurs are, I think, of two classes: (*a*) before the outset of some severe bodily illness like fever which perhaps ends fatally; (*b*) before the explosion of some brooding catastrophe in the individual's affairs or social relations.

In the first case a supernatural explanation is not needed, since a brooding disease, especially when it has what is known medically as its period of incubation, may be forefelt in the bodily economy, which it threatens, as a vague, sad foreboding, before it is so far developed as to exhibit its proper form and symptoms and to be perceived. The language of feeling goes before the language of thought in the order of human development, and has a deeper significance in the nature of mental function. Peradventure the prophetic feeling of evil to come takes form in the person's dream of a particular disease before the lurking disease in him shows itself, as it subsequently does; and it may certainly translate itself in the instinctive certitude of a sick man that he will die, though he is only at the beginning of an illness the symptoms of which, on the face of them, warrant not the expressed despair. Here, as

elsewhere, if not everywhere else, the notion of a supernatural agency springs from the ignorance of natural causes.

Nor do the facts in the second class of cases, when they are examined closely, lie outside the bounds of a natural explanation. To fore*feel* vaguely is no less natural than to fore*see* clearly; it only seems more mysterious because the intimations of feeling have not yet been studied and defined like the language of thought; have not, in fact, been interpreted methodically at all. Fanciful it may be, but it is not quite foolish to suppose that there are deep thrills of feeling in man's being which have a more apocalyptic cosmic meaning than the achievements of his conscious thoughts. In the ravishing airs of music by which they are transported many persons would fain believe that they discover the outpourings of a divine harmony and echoes from a heavenly home.*

Let me cite two instances exemplifying the prophetic instinct of an impending calamity before any prevision of it. I take them from Shakspeare's dramas, because in his creations there is oftentimes a finer essence of truth fitly expressed than a common intellect will discover by a life-long study of the details of nature: more true history of human character in the inventions of his art than in the laboured expatiations of professed historians. As Hamlet is a less mythical and actually more real person—certainly could be worse missed—than any historical person who has ever lived, his life may properly furnish one instance. Perhaps the saddest words he utters in the tragical drama, since they are the simple and genuine wail of his fate-stricken soul, not the studied and rather

* Of music Dr. Newman writes: "Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No, they have escaped from some higher sphere; they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home; they are the voice of angels or the magnificat of saints, or the living laws of divine government or the divine attributes; something are they besides themselves which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter." An eloquent, emotion-stirring outpouring of emotion! But what shadow of proof or probability is there that they are "the voice of angels or the magnificat of saints," except Dr. Newman's strong desire, ingraft by his spiritual training, to have it so in the present and in perpetuity?

self-pleasing plaints which he was wont to pour out with a somewhat histrionic exaggeration, are those in which, before the last eventful scene of the tragedy, he says to Horatio—

"But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter.

"HOR. Nay, good my lord——

"HAM. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would, perhaps, trouble a woman.

"HOR. If your mind dislike anything, obey it: I will forestall their repair thither, and say you are not fit.

"HAM. Not a whit, we defy augury: there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all: since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?"

In these words sobs the note of the predestined catastrophe, a forefelt fate of woe, inapprehensible yet inevitable, which is maturing inexorably in the womb of time and will be accomplished at its appointed hour. "'T is destiny, unshunnable as death." Given a mind like Hamlet's, tuned to great fineness of feeling, and endowed with large capacity of reflection —too apt, indeed, to think so precisely on the event as to lose itself in a waste of over-meditation; torn with grief, indignation, and doubt in the coil of villainy by which he is benetted round; demanding clearness of judgment in order to act, and knowing well the compulsive necessity of its own nature to be thorough in action when once it starts to act; prone, therefore, to put off or shirk decision until forced into it— what wonder that within the shadow of the immediately impending crisis he was chilled by a foreboding gloom without foreseeing what shape the calamity would take. Might it not well be a case in which feeling had its reasons deeper than reason could fathom?

The second instance is that of Romeo, who, amidst the mirth, banter, and frolic of his friends, is struck with the sudden chill of a tragical presentiment, the misgiving of some fatal consequence hanging in the stars which will bitterly begin its fatal course from that night's adventure: a forefeeling of the final catastrophe in the initial act of the tragedy, the presaging knell of fate sounding its sad premonition in a sensitive

soul. Considering the discord and fierce blood-feuds which existed between the Capulets and the Montagues, and that he, a Montague, was just going, an unbidden guest, to intrude into a festival of the Capulets, a sensitive and thoughtful mind, consenting to the frolic out of good nature against the instinctive dissent of its judgment, might well feel a presaging thrill of misadventure in the rash adventure. That his giddy companions felt no boding of the kind was no matter, seeing that only minds of the finest strain and harmony of organization are so tuned in unison with nature as to be susceptible to these subtile shades of sympathy with coming events in it.

Alas! for the surety of a rule of prediction in matters mystical, it is necessary sometimes to interpret presentiments, like dreams, contrariwise. A sense of extraordinary elation and well-being fails not now and then to precede immediately the occurrence of a great misfortune.

> "If I may trust the flattering truth of sleep,
> My dreams presage some joyful news at hand:
> My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne;
> And all this day an unaccustom'd spirit
> Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts."

These are the banished Romeo's exulting words just before he is heart-stricken by the fatal news of Juliet's death, and is to perish overwhelmed in the last events of the pitiless tragedy. Here again is no cause for wonder, no room for mystery, no need of supernatural explanation. An unaccustomed feeling of singular well-being sometimes goes before the outbreak of an acute disease, being the transient effect of inflamed vital energy revolting against its threatened hurt before it succumbs to the disease and is rendered weak and sad; such a transient elation is particularly evident sometimes before an epileptic fit, and is often so marked before an outbreak of acute mania as to look like and to have been deemed an inspiration. What is to hinder a mind of fine fashion and tone, enshrouded in the gloom and borne along in the fateful current of a developing tragedy to its foredoomed end—an end to which the various events, small and great, near and remote, essential and incidental, conspire

inexorably—from a like jubilant flash of reactive energy against the forefelt, albeit not foreseen, catastrophe?

However, when pleasing conjecture has had its way in the interpretation of these mysterious phenomena, sober reflection must needs allow the greatest weight to the vulgar and stubborn fallacy of concluding from agreeing without regard to opposing instances. It is a joy to the mind to mark the hits, it is a strain to it to mark the misses. If anybody chances to think of a friend at the Antipodes about the time when he hears later to his surprise that his friend died (and in subsequent narration the uncertain time is pretty sure to become the exact moment), or feels unaccountably sad just before an unforeseen misfortune befalls, he is vividly impressed by, and pleased to tell, the awe-striking story of the singular coincidence; but he takes no note of the many instances when he unexpectedly thought of a friend who did not die at that exact moment or at all, nor of the many times when he felt unaccountably sad without the sequel of a great misfortune.

That there are many more things in heaven and earth than philosophy can spell out or so much as dream of, and mysterious feelings in man which come either as pulses from the far-reaching depths of humanity within him, or are caused by unknown conditions of nature without him, may readily be admitted. Even the fool who has said in his heart, "There is no God," would not be so foolish as to deny that. But it is to go a long way beyond the warrant of observation and reason to accept off-hand the stories of spiritual apparitions and mysterious sympathies which have had, and still have, a strong hold on popular credence—stories whose hot attestation blazons the need of their confirmation. For example: the apparition of a person at the moment of his death, in his form and habit as he lived, to a friend a thousand miles away; the dream of some one's place and time and mode of death at the exact time and place, and in the exact way it took place; the communication of a thought or feeling between two persons who are in different rooms of the same house or in different houses miles apart; and why not add the more vulgar instance (which rests, after all, on a wider basis

of experience) of the tingling of a person's ear when somebody is somewhere talking about him? Although these and like stories are positively vouched for by zealous observers whose credibility lacks nothing except what it suffers from the entire lack in them of a capacity to observe, they are believed rather because they are wished than because they are proved to be true; they might be expected therefore still to hold their ground stoutly in faith were they disproved by the positive evidence of facts.

When two neurotic persons, eager to make discoveries in psychical research, go to work to test diligently by experiment whether the one, when he mounts to the attic, can respond instantly by telepathic sympathy of thought to the thought which the other conceives in the kitchen, having carefully prearranged the conditions of the experiment so as to avoid any collusion except the unconscious subtile collusion of their like-structured minds, it would perhaps be strange, human nature being what it is, if the two did not echo. One knows not indeed which to admire most—the simple zeal for the truth, or the zealous simplicity with which two colluding natures go about conscientiously to prevent collusion. The experiment so conducted is pathetically absurd. For it is not they who ought to conduct it—it is they who require to be controlled as factors in the conducted experiment; and that should be done by a cool and competent outside observer, unbiassed and critical, who regulates strictly all the proper conditions and tests. The pity of it in such case notably is that the presence of a sceptical mind is hostile to the conduction of the telepathic sympathy, or to the spiritual manifestation, which so resents the irreverent tests that the expected event does not then come off; like the miracle, it requires an ambient medium of believing minds—it fails to show itself in the unfit medium of unbelievers because of their unbelief.

Now an event which cannot tolerate the searching conditions alone sufficient to test it scientifically, but claims a privilege of sanctuary from the criticism of reason, belongs logically to the domain of that kind of faith which is proud to exult over reason.

§ *Fallacies of Coincidence in Observation.*

The proneness of the mind to respond to agreeing and to overlook differing or opposing instances, out of which so many errors of thought have sprung, is not manifest in reasoning from facts only, it works equally in the observation or perception of the facts themselves; it is the tendency which so often vitiates direct observation of that which lies plain to sense were sense only applied plainly to it. A wrong idea or image of the fact, suggested by some like features of it, precludes perception of the real fact. How easy it is to make mistakes as to the identities of persons, and how often it happens that a witness, or one witness after another, swears positively in a court of justice to the identity of a person, who is not only not the person he is sworn to be, but perhaps is not much like him. Nothing can be more positive than the assurance with which the mistaken evidence is given on such occasion, nothing more inexcusable as an example of observation, nothing more instructive as an illustration of a common fallacy of observation. As in reasoning, so in perception, the tendency to generalize is stronger than the tendency to discriminate. What happens is that the striking likeness of one or two features excites the notion of a certain person in the observer's mind, and that the mental image thus raised so usurps his attention that he has no eyes for the manifest and manifold differences in the real object. Attention, fascinated by the like, cannot attend to the unlike. Perceiving the resemblance, he instantly, although unconsciously, fills in the rest of the picture, not from the real face before him, but from the mental image evoked in him; just as in ordinary vision the habit is to see a few features or signs only which the mind, informed by previous experience, interprets into the object; or as in ordinary hearing we catch only partial sounds of the badly articulated word, filling up the rest of the sound to complete the words of a known language—for we cannot do it with a little-known language—from the internal reservoir of former experience.

Were any one to mark and mind that which he really sees and hears in the course of a day, he might be not a little

surprised to discover how small a part of what he thinks he sees and hears he does actually see and hear, and how often he thinks he sees and hears much that he never sees and hears at all. Passing glimpses suggest objects, as passing sounds do words, which in most cases, no doubt, are the proper objects and words, but by no means always so; for, if careful attention be given on each occasion to the supposed perception, and it be pursued home to actual verification, it will be found in not a few instances that the object seen or the word heard was not really what it was thought to be, in some instances perhaps not even the object or word at all. The healthiest mind, in the course of its daily experiences, has many passing illusions or hallucinations of that sort, which it does not stay to test and correct, because they are mere transient incidents, of no concern to its immediate purpose; as in like manner, when not seriously occupied, it has the strangest vagaries of thought and fancy that come and go unheeded. Every one knows that the mind plays many tricks in sleep, but few persons realize, until they observe themselves closely and reflect on what they observe, how many like tricks it plays habitually in waking life. Let loose from the restraining hold of its habits of experience, it gambols almost as riotously as in dreams.

Were it not more easy for every mind to perceive resemblances than to perceive differences, and to make generalizations than not to make them, it is hard to see how understanding could ever grow into continuity and unity of being; for if it were as eager and careful to note differences as to note resemblances, it might be occupied all its life with the work—such the infinite variety of nature—and so never get forward in development out of distracting plurality into fruitful unity. How in fact reflect the external universe internally in any unity of species or forms? The tendency to unity is the effect and exponent of its individuality. Always there is a latent and seductive gratification in the feeling and the perception of an agreement; it is something which, being *agree*able, assimilates easily and is a mental gain; whereas it is rather a trial, and may be even a pain, to perceive and register that which does not agree—that which, being in a literal sense

*disagree*able, is not easily assimilable, but dissimilable. The perception or notion assimilates that which, being able to *asself* it—that is, to make of the same nature with itself—is suited to foster its growth, evincing, like every living thing, its fundamental impulse to add to itself and the gratification of such increase; while it shrinks from and rejects for assimilation elsewhere that which it cannot make part of itself, and most of all that which is hostile to its nature and growth.

Let any one be put in face of some new fact or relation which he is required to observe for the first time, or of a new feature of an old fact or relation, he comes to it necessarily with a mind preoccupied with notions of facts or relations which he has observed formerly and which do not fit it, and devoid of notions which fit it. How, then, can he truly mind it? It is impossible he can observe it rightly in the first instance, not having the suitable interpretation-notions—no cerebral reflexes fitted to perform it. At the same time, he could not mind the fact at all, any more than he could know an acquaintance if he had not the prepossession of some related notion. The present and future cannot be thought by anybody but in terms of the past; for thought is instructed by informed experience, and cannot go beyond it until it has been reinformed—reconstructed that is—by new experience: the past is the indispensable basis of any knowledge of the present, and of any prediction or expectation with regard to the future.

To every one a *thing* is what he *thinks* it—in effect, a *think;* and to think a new thing he must first use the old thought. How can he do otherwise before new experience enables him to organize a new *think?* The old *thing* or *think* represents object *plus* subject; the new thing, therefore, is no thing to him until it is asselfed in a think, for until then it is object *minus* subject. And this is true also of all the properties and relations of the object. If he tells or foretells anything of it or of them he must do it in terms of the perception-language which he knows; obviously cannot do it in terms of a perception-language which he has yet to learn. In applying, then, the old notion—the informed cerebral reflex—

to a new fact, as he must necessarily apply some notion to it in order to observe it intelligently at all, he uses a notion or reflex which, not fitting the fact exactly, comes between him and it, in so far as it is unfit, and so hinders him from getting the just apprehension of it; instead of being a completely fitting instrument to make the required hold, it is *pro tanto* an obstacle which hinders his mind from adjusting itself to the fact.

What, then, must every one do in order to observe rightly? Putting himself resolutely into close converse with the new experience, he holds his notion loosely, as provisional and modifiable, or lays it clean aside, bringing other more serviceable notions to his assistance, in order to get a full and faithful impression of the facts in that wherein they disagree from or contradict his prepossession; for, if not, the thing which he sees will not be the thing as it is, but the thing which his mental prepossession thinks it; he will *prejudge* it as his mind is preinformed, which, if it is not preinformed rightly, is *prejudice* in its ill sense. The bent of the mind so preoccupied is, first of all, to resist the intrusion of the new notion with silent stubbornness, since there is no place for it; afterwards, when the passive barrier is forced, with angry prejudice, passion coming to the aid of the resistance, since it is a shock to the organized tracks of thought; and, last of all, when the intruder has gained admission, to mould it into the shapes of its own notions as much as possible, so forming it to its liking as, perhaps, to deform it. Whosoever tries frankly to realize the concrete physical underlying the mental process must feel the thing to be mechanically inevitable. The idea in possession cannot choose but resist dispossession.

For a like reason it is that discoveries in science and inventions in the arts have a long and tedious gestation, although they seem most simple and easy when they are brought forth to light. So obvious, once made, that the wonder is they were overlooked for a day, yet overlooked through so many generations that the wonder is they were made at last. Naturally they were inconceivable before they were conceived, and as naturally they are easily conceivable when once they have been conceived. In divining what may

be one cannot but proceed from the basis of what has been and what is, and so construct the new in forms of the old. The new conception starts not out of the head, Minerva-like, complete in itself and ready to undergo the full test of experiment; it is reached tentatively and by degrees, by modifications of old notions through impressions made by altered facts and relations, much of the modifying impression being unconscious in the first instance. The increments of experience silently saturate the mind until they crystallize consciously into a new conception of things; just as if, after much patient brooding over the subject, a nervous circuit of discovery, electric-like, were suddenly closed. Then the last man who expounds and proves gets the credit of the discovery because he gives the final exposition; the gradual maturing in silent gestation, making no show, for the most part passes unheeded. Not by reasoning is it that we get knowledge—we only make the implicit explicit by that conscious process; the knowledge is latent in structural organization before it is expressed in conscious function: we have it when we can reason about it.

Accidents are oftentimes the happy occasions of inventions, as observations of animals have been from time to time, because, presenting things to the mind under new aspects and in new relations, they startle thought out of its deep grooves of habit and so provoke new adjustments and reflections. No doubt there is often as much new instruction to be had out of old and common things, were they only observed carefully and curiously with open sense and free mind, as can be obtained from the most ingenious experiments to devise new combinations of things; but the difficulty is to break the thrall of unheeding habit and to stir attention to what one is not used to heed. So it becomes necessary to go about to make new experiments, or to await the happy thought-kindling accident, in order to discover that which a familiar instance lying close at hand might teach plainly if duly minded. Why is this thing so? Why is this thing not truly so?—these are two questions which, if clearly put and rigorously answered in regard to many common experiences, might often reveal new and unsuspected truth.

§ *Laws of Assimilation and Discrimination.*

In the strong impression made on the mind by coincidences and resemblances, whereby it happens that dissidences and differences are so easily overlooked and neglected both in observation and reasoning, we have then at bottom an instance of the law of mental assimilation. Like takes to itself like as that which, agreeing with it, it naturally likes to do; and inasmuch as, while doing that, it occupies the attention, engrossing the consciousness, the contradictory instance or difference is inevitably left much or entirely in the dark. To attend is literally to tend to, and one attention, when it is so strung as to be tension, physically excludes another attention.

The perception of analogies and resemblances in nature leads to general descriptions or so-called generalizations, which are afterwards verified or not. When the generalization is not verified, because a contradictory or irreconcilable instance presents itself, then the dissentient experience, if taken sincerely into the mind, is organized there as the nucleus of a new organ or faculty, so to speak, and thereafter assimilates its likes: it is the basis of a new sorting or classification of facts. A fresh track of function is opened to which associations or, as it were, junctions are formed in due course; a rich addition being thus made to the cerebral plexus of the mental organization. To see difference, to discriminate—probably the primal condition of the origin of consciousness—is plainly as essential a part of mental development as to see resemblance—that is, to assimilate; the complementary aim and work of the functions being to reflect, as far as possible, in uniformities and varieties of mental growth, the uniformities and varieties of external nature—to develop a mental order in conformity with the order of things.

The order of notions in the best mind, and in the best achievements of the best minds, falls infinitely short of reflecting the order of things in nature, either in exactness or in completeness, since it consists of multitudinous partial relations and groups of relations, incomplete, fragmentary, and superficial; and that always within a very limited range

compared with the limitless range of inaccessible phenomena. Not an observation, simple or profound, but is really superficial; for the thing observed, shallow or deep, rests on infinity and eternity—that is, on the unknown and unknowable. It is the business of observation to make the correspondence more exact, more connected, more complete within its range, and, if so be, to extend the range; a work which must in the nature of things always be gradual, since such fuller knowledge, entailing new or changed ideas, imports a demand upon the mental organization to put in function, if not to develop, new lines of organic structure.

This organization of new cerebral reflexes it cannot do at all, except under these conditions—that it retain its plastic energy, and that it takes the time necessary to do it.

Compare in this relation an old man with a child: both hold confidently to the associations of ideas which experience has ingrafted in them; but while the old man, whose mental tissues are dull and stiff with the rigidity of age, is unable easily or at all to relinquish them, and little curious or able to assimilate new ideas and to make adjustments to new circumstances, the child, though quite as strongly dominated by the few notional associations which it has—and in the nature of things cannot conceive otherwise until it is exposed to new experiences—is full of eager curiosity, quickly impressionable by new facts, aptly plastic in thought, feeling, and conduct to new surroundings. When the brain, by reason of a natural simplicity of constitution in the low savage and in the animal, or of congenital defect in the imbecile, is without the nervous substrata necessary to subserve new developments of function, then it is impossible to ingraft the finer and more complex associations of ideas, and almost impossible to dissociate the few simple and common ones which the circumstances of life have occasioned. The mental organization, being simple and general, is little modifiable; for the more complex and special, the more modifiable it is.

How should the savage separate in thought two events that have always gone together in his experience? It would be as easy for him to separate two movements which he had never in his life performed separately. How can he learn a new

thought, the organic basis of which, being laid only by the conquests of culture through many generations, his simple brain is destitute of? Charms and prayers, auguries and omens, oracles, sortilege, ordeals, exorcisms, incantations, and divinations are the natural resort and refuge, as they are the exponents, of active imagination co-operating with defective observation and little-developed understanding. Man must have something definite in the way of belief, must believe something, in order to act at all; acting, then, in relation to a vast and mysterious universe of which he knows next to nothing, he is compelled to fashion for himself forms or species of it, however provisional, as fixed stays or supports. Believing in sorcery, he imagines a sorcerer, and, striving to get rid of him, institutes trial by ordeal, in order to detect the hidden worker of mysterious evil; thus he establishes an agency in relation to which at all events he can act definitely, and gains some sense of security from unknown dangers. In the inapprehensible immensity he cannot choose but make a little enclosure of some sort in which to fence himself. For a like reason it is that, believing in supernatural agency, he makes appeal to it by oaths on various solemn occasions, in hope to gain thereby veracity of testimony.*

Oaths, like ordeals, being invocations of the supernatural, have the same reason and the same value. When a witness in a court of justice, using some ordained formula, kisses a holy book, or raises his arm towards heaven, or breaks a saucer, by way of calling God to witness that he will speak the truth, he feels himself under a stronger obligation, and so far is under a stronger compulsion to speak the truth, than if he solemnly said he would not lie. The theory is that the Deity, thus invoked, will respond to the solemn appeal by special attention to what he says, and duly punish him if he speaks falsely. If he is so young or so ignorant of the nature of an oath as not to know that he is asking a God to watch him, who may send him to hell if he tells a lie, his testimony is rejected. In like manner, when a person accused of sorcery or other crime was sentenced to walk over red-hot ploughshares and

* It hardly admits of doubt that oaths are, as Mr. Tylor has shown, descended legitimately from ordeals, of which they are in fact the natural survivals.

to prove the accusation false by getting safely over them—as he did sometimes by the benevolent or interested collusion of those who, having to arrange the business, painted the iron red but did not heat it red-hot—or was made to drink a dose of deadly poison and to demonstrate his innocence by not dying, the ordeal was a formal appeal for a special supernatural interposition to save the innocent by suspending the operation of natural law.

Except among a few savage African tribes, who still represent the intellectual and moral infancy of mankind, such trials by ordeal have now been abandoned as cruel superstitions; for, as knowledge of nature grew, reason revolted against the notion that the Deity would intervene to change its ordained course by special miracle on every occasion when He was clamorously importuned by men to do so. Was it not an amazing instance of egoism that so poor a creature on so mean a planet should have expected it? He could hardly have ventured ever to expect it had he not previously made some sort of personal god in his own image. But oaths still retain their privilege, albeit they have not the authority they once had, because it does not repugn reason to expect special interventions, when specially invoked by oath or prayer, in the workings of the human mind. A certain community of spiritual nature between an omnipresent supernatural soul of things and the natural soul of man makes the theory of a special and direct operation of the one on the other for the occasion less hard to conceive, and more easy to believe, than a special intervention to suspend a physical law of nature.

Anyhow, the oath works powerfully on the imagination of the swearer; its use, therefore, having solemn social sanction, may still be good when its original meaning has evaporated; not otherwise than as public prayer for the sick in churches, though it affect not the virulence of a microbe, being still a precious proof and proclamation of social sympathy and solidarity, helps to keep up the coherence and stability of the social organization. For it would be a dangerous thing for the human kind, so long as it desires to believe in itself and to increase and multiply on earth, to apply pure reason critically to examine its foundations; nothing being more certain than

the dissolvent action of such a rigorous logic, which might in the end be to leave it nothing to believe.

Undoubtedly the trend of things in mind as in matter is to eliminate the supernatural and to discover growth, law, and order where formerly creation, chance, and caprice reigned. The special solemnity of the oath, therefore, may eventually go the way similar appeals to the supernatural have gone. But that event, when it happens, need cause no alarm; for the lessons of the past abundantly warrant the assurance that the social organization can, in case of necessity, find within itself the motives and sanctions of its maintenance and development, which it was used to seek in supernatural ordinances outside itself.* Perchance the last use of oaths may be the impious invocation of God's curse by those who have no belief in God.

§ *The Favourable Conditions of Superstition.*

It is obvious that the tendency of mind to give undue weight to the according event, and no heed to the events which do not answer desire or expectation—so fruitful a cause of errors of observation and reasoning—has been a great, if not the main, cause of the authority and credit which so many superstitions have enjoyed. Has it not notably been just where observation and reasoning were difficult or impossible that superstitions

* Now, as always, it often finds a higher sanction than the oath in the conventional social feeling. Perjury notoriously counts for nothing, is taken quietly as natural, in the English Divorce Court. A man in good social position, who did not go into the witness-box to commit perjury in order to save the reputation of a lady with whom he had committed adultery, might incur severe social condemnation. A code of honour exacts that one of the ten commandments be thrown overboard to conceal the breach of another. So it was with duelling when duelling was in fashion, despite the Christianity which was also in fashion. That which in itself would have been a *mortal* became a *venial* sin. Perhaps half the horror excited in the Protestant mind by Jesuitical casuistry in respect of morality has sprung from an intense dislike of the exact knowledge which it exhibits of human nature as it is actually, from a hypocritical aversion to see and own the facts to be what they are, from a strong repugnance to the elaborate system by which an impossible ideal morality was adapted practically to the circumstances of the special occasion. Hence Protestantism has necessarily always been the more hypocritical the more extreme its protestation of sanctity.

have sprung up and flourished? Universally among savage and barbarous peoples, where observation and reflection were inchoate and rudimentary, intellect being in its infancy, and among cultured people specially in relation to matters that lay outside the range of definite apprehension. At the present day the ocean and the desert, the vast solitudes of the barren waters and barren sands, remain the chosen haunts of spirits and phantoms; for where the senses are overpowered by the dread vastness of nature, so that they cannot fix themselves in definite and steady apprehensions, they, reeling in a bewildered vertigo and producing a panic-like awe, become the easy victims of hallucinations and superstitions.* In vastness which cannot be grasped in apprehension or compassed in thought there is overpowering grandeur, and that inspires overwhelming awe; which is the reason why the desert and the ocean have been so full of terrors and are still called sublime, while an acre of sand or a pond of water, being nowise overwhelming, have no terrors and stir no awful suggestions of the infinite, either with or without an initial capital letter. It was a vague and mysterious awe of the immensity surrounding him, not apprehensible in definite thought and feeling, that moved man in his early days to create so many gods; just as in this age and country a person not prone to superstition cannot, in a gloomy forest on a dark night, however much he may despise his weakness, help being affected by feelings of fear and awe which would seem ridiculous and humiliating in broad daylight.

It is in proportion as observation and reasoning have become more proficient that superstitions have dwindled and died. Is there a single person living now who believes that Baal ever answered a single prayer of the devout Canaanite? Or that Jupiter ever inclined his ear to hear the supplication of a pious Roman? Or that the Mexican was any the better for the human sacrifices which he solemnly offered to Uitzilopochtli? Not one left now to do the dead gods reverence.

* Vast forests have a similar awing effect upon the mind. The forest growths of Russia, at one time overrunning almost all the central and northern territories, contributed powerfully to the polytheistic faiths of the early Slavs —in fact, implanted them so deeply in the Slav nature that the Russians believe in their forest spirits to this day.—*The Russian Revolt*, by E. NOBLE, 1885.

But it would have gone hard with him who, living when these gods ruled in human faith, had made a denial of their power and good or ill will. They were faiths which, being without foundation in reason, were destined inevitably to wane and vanish before the brighter light of better sense and reason. When man puts a being of like mind and character to himself in and over nature—above all and through all, eternal in duration and infinite in power—in order to satisfy the mental yearning for a source, in terms of his own thought, of the illimitable energies and operations which it is impossible in the end he, a finite creature, should ever apprehend otherwise than in finite conceptions or express otherwise than in finite terms of himself—impossible, therefore, he should really apprehend or express at all—he naturally solicits his favour and deprecates his anger, just as he might solicit the favour and deprecate the anger of an earthly ruler who had power of life and death over him. But if he is convinced by reasoned experience that he receives no answer to supplications which are as vainly spent as if they were addressed to the shifting cloud or to the passing wind, he naturally ceases to offer them, and first doubting of, finally disbelieves in, the superintendence and even the existence of such a being. So through the ages it has come to pass that creeds have waned and gods have died; for creeds do not, like bubbles, burst, but stealthily, like clouds dislimned, lose their lineaments and gradually disperse. Happily so, since the past thus slides into the future gradually by constructive evolution without the rude shock of destructive revolution.

The history of medicine, like the history of religion, is full of examples of fallacious observations and of superstitious theories; and for the same reason—namely, the extreme difficulties of observation and the strong propensity to supernatural beliefs where mystery and fear prevail. The human organism is the most intricate and complex structure in the world; a fabric of such nice and implicated correlations of parts and functions that the more its mechanism is known the more the wonder grows that it ever keeps in working order so well and so long as it does; and it is in infinitely subtile and complex relations with a variety of external influences, physical

and social. The exact causes of its disorders and the exact means of putting them right are inevitably, therefore, the most difficult and complex study in the world, and being so they yield large scope for fallacies of observation and inference. Many, therefore, were the false theories of diseases, and many the monstrous remedies for them which enjoyed immense reputation for a season, to be abandoned ultimately as useless or pernicious.*

It was not only in such cases that the nature of diseases and the art of curing them were insurmountably obscure, but fear lent its mighty aid to magnify the mystery; for disease and death naturally stirred apprehension and alarm, and fear and ignorance are the legitimate parents of superstition. When the foundations of his being were shaken by disease, and he felt himself sinking through them, the trembling mortal seeking for an outward stay clutched convulsively at every support, spiritual or medical, which might be offered to him.

So it came to pass that the causes of natural calamities were sought in the anger of the gods, in the malice of demons, in the malignant aspects of the stars, in the evil eyes of witches, in the divine judgment of sin, and in like superstitious imaginings; and the alleviation or cure of them in the special favour of particular gods or spirits, or in the prayers of saints, or in exorcisms, or in the eager and confident use of medicinal substances which, because their origin was involved in mystery, or because of their rarity or extreme nastiness, or because of some equally groundless fancy, were thought to have singular and sovereign virtues. If the patient recovered after prayer or remedy, as many times he would do by the salutary efforts of nature, it was proof of its curative virtue; no thought being given to the numerous instances in which no good effect

* *Roasted toad* was once used as a specific for gout, the toad having been baked alive. This was the receipt: "Put the toads alive into an earthen pot, and dry them in an oven moderately heated, till they become fit to be powdered." Boyle recommended the thigh-bone of an executed criminal as a valuable remedy for dysentery. Other such remedies were the bowels of a mole cut open alive, and mummy made of the lungs of a man who had died a violent death.—*Pharmacologia*, by J. A. PARIS, M.D., 1833. Revolting remedies, but vastly less pernicious than such remedies as mercury and blood-letting, each of which, when in full swing of fashionable abuse, may soberly be said to have, like Saul, slain its thousands, nay, like David, its tens of thousands.

followed, nor to the other agencies besides the prayer or remedy which were at work in the cases in which recovery did follow.

The follies of physic have been no less numerous, if less pernicious and pestilential, than the fables of religion; the follies of the one and the fables of the other illustrating the same defects and tendencies of human observation and thought in a parallel series of fictitious causes and fictitious remedies. In whatever bog any man may be plunged, he must needs make the same kind of movements, successful or unsuccessful, to get out of it; so out of whatever darkness any mind is struggling to reach light, it must necessarily go through the same kind of errors and fallacies in its struggles.

§ *Fallacies of Collusion.*

The fallacy of observation and reasoning by which a nation was deluded into the flattering belief of its directly intervening god in special answer to prayer must have worked powerfully to sustain and strengthen the belief, which, without it, could hardly have taken such frequent root and flourished so strongly as history proves it to have done. But, though a main, this fallacy of coincidence was not the entire cause of the credit of superstitions of the kind. In cases of signal accord between the omen or prayer and its fulfilment, where a chance-coincidence was so improbable as practically to exclude the notion of it, and where, therefore, the claim of a causal relation might well seem undeniable, no proper account was taken of the possibility of collusion. Now, this collusion might not only take place between persons concerned, whose interest it was to make the experiment a success, and who, consciously or unconsciously, conspired together for that purpose, as priests, rulers, omen-mongers, workers of magic, and the like dupers of mankind have often done, but might be a self-connivance. There have always been individuals more wise than the multitude, who, making the natural use of their superior sagacity to gain advantages for themselves, have fooled it for their power and profit, and often at the same time for its good —Minos pretending to be advised by Jupiter, Numa retiring to

take secret counsel of Ægeria, and many more like tricks used by the founders of different religions the better to beguile; and it is very certain that in this way projects and laws and institutions obtained an authority and acceptance which they would not have obtained as the mere counsels of a wiser individual, and that useful customs and practices were thus consecrated as religious ceremonials.* That which was believed to be the direct inspiration of the god, and to be done by supernatural ways, carried a sanction with it which it had not as the bare inspiration of human wisdom effected by natural ways; the omen and prayer were the mysterious means of obtaining supernatural countenance for the natural event which the sagacious mind, seeing farther ahead than the vulgar, had foreseen, or had designed, by working impressively on vulgar minds, to bring to pass.†

Not always was the deception entirely wilful—sheer fraud; witting and systematic deceit of that kind is comparatively rare. A subtile collusion with self, a large measure of secret self-deception, made the author of the dupery to some extent its victim also. For he who, having an interest or pleasure in duping others, lets will loose from moral restraint and makes a practice of acting the part, grows inevitably and easily to the habit of its exercise, and finally dupes himself: deliberate impostor by art he becomes an ingrained impostor by second nature; the sure working of natural law thus avenging wrong-doing on the nature of the wrong-doer. Note a familiar example of this process of demoralization in the ease

* The greatest obstacle which vaccination encountered in India was the belief that the natural small-pox was the work of a mischievous deity, MAH-RY UMMA, or rather that the disease was an incarnation of her in the infected person. The fear of offending her and provoking her resentment made the natives averse to vaccination, until they were reassured by a new superstitious impression; no other than the belief that the goddess had spontaneously chosen this new and milder method of manifesting herself, and that she might be worshipped with equal acceptance under this new shape.—*Pharmacologia*, p. 19, by Dr. PARIS.

† It hurt not, it enhanced rather the dignity and authority of the pagan oracle that it never answered plainly and directly, but gave its responses in enigmatical and darkly mysterious words; the very mystery of the oracular language was calculated to impress the imagination, augment the awe, and fascinate the belief of the anxious inquirer. How speak ineffable things except in quite unintelligible language.

with which one who begins by telling in dramatic fashion stories that excite wonder goes on sometimes to exaggerate and embellish and invent until they become complete romances, and in the end he is not himself sure what is true and what is false in them. His imagination, like that of the opium-eater, is so demoralized by habitual over-stimulation that the imaginary seems more real than the real, and he loses actual sense of the distinction between them.

There is not a province of human observation and thought, when its history is examined, which is not found to teem with superstitious fallacies and fancies. Let him who would have instructive proof in a comparatively modern instance of the vitality of bad observation grown into superstition study the hideous records of witchcraft in civilized countries. If cynical, he may find ample gratification of his worst mood in the horrible and heartrending stories of the tortures and deaths which, in the name of God and for His glory, were inflicted on multitudes of innocent people suspected to be witches, and in the reflection that the condemnation of these poor harmless wretches was eagerly sanctioned even by the good and wise men of the time—among others, by so learned and distinguished a judge as Sir Matthew Hale and a not less learned and distinguished physician, Sir Thomas Browne, so late as the year 1662. That men of large understanding share the errors of their contemporaries is no proof, not even fair presumption, of the truth of false belief; it is proof only that they believe wrongly concerning that of which they have no understanding and no right to a belief.

The particular reasons which Sir Matthew Hale gave for his judgment, on the occasion of condemning to death the last two women who were executed for bewitching children in England, have a general and lasting interest. "That there were such creatures as witches he made no doubt at all; for, first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much; secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such crime." A third reason, which had its weight in determining the verdict, was the statement of Sir Thomas Browne, who "was clearly of opinion that the persons were bewitched; that in Denmark

there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons." * All which was, in effect, to say that the belief must be true because it had the sacred sanction of religion, because it was a general belief, and because it had been attested lately by common report of remarkable instances.

Now, it is plain that all these sanctions rested at bottom on the same fallacy, namely, the common malobservation which, taking note of agreeing, takes no note of opposing instances, and overlooks entirely the real cause of the event when the attention is fixed on fictitious causes. The fallacy no doubt gave rise, in the first instance, to common report; then common report spread widely into common belief; and finally common belief acquired the sanctity of a religious tenet. The example may fitly teach that a doctrine is not necessarily true because it has the religious sanction, is believed by all the world, even by the most learned and upright men of the time, and has the reported confirmation of striking examples from time to time † It is only too true that nations have received, as sacred, tenets and dogmas which would be thought now to discredit the intelligence of a well-trained school-boy. What pledge have men, or can they have, that the supernatural beliefs of to-day will not, like their predecessors of yesterday, fall into disrepute to-morrow, and in their turn serve as humiliating memorials of the credulity and infatuation of the people who hold them? It would be a dark outlook for the progress of human intelligence if it were not so.

* *A Short Treatise touching Sheriff's Accompts;* to which is added, *A Tryal of Witches*, written by the Right Honourable Sir MATTHEW HALE, Kt., London, 1716. Rose Cullender and Amy Duny, indicted at the Assizes at Bury St. Edmunds, executed March 17, 1662. Although Sir M. Hale says that "the Judge and all the Court were fully satisfied with the verdict," yet it appears from the report that Mr. Serjeant Keeling "seemed much unsatisfied with it" (the evidence), "and thought it not sufficient to convict the prisoners."

† The usual course of an apocryphal story, especially when it is of a kind to rouse admiration, is to grow in credit, when it is not positively contradicted and exposed at the time, until it is deemed indisputable. Though it may then be proved false a hundred times, the disproof will not have the least effect on the vulgar faith; it will crop up perennially as authentic. Meanwhile it may have been laughed at when it was first started as too absurd to be worth contradiction; or if definitely refuted, the perfect refutation was soon drowned in the acclamation of blatant belief and forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURAL DEFECTS AND ERRORS OF OBSERVATION AND REASONING—*Continued.*

§ *Causes of Erroneous Observation.*

SO many and great errors and evils having flowed from bad observation and reasoning, it is natural to ask how it comes to pass that man observes and reasons so badly when his business is to observe and reason. Because he is a limited being with very limited capacities, while that which he has to observe and reason about is unlimited. Observation being the organic construction of an internal order of mind in conformity with the external order of nature, it is a process of mental organization, to be perfected only by degrees, not an instantaneous mental photography. Had the order of nature been entirely objective men might have found it all out ere now, since they would have had nothing more to do than to reflect it in mental image; had it been purely subjective they might have had equal success, since they would have had nothing to do but look inwardly and make a transcription of what they saw there; but because it required the joint action of the within and the without in a slow process of organic development, nothing less than the patient construction of a mental fabric, it was impossible the knowledge of it should come otherwise than by minute increments slowly made and fixed through the ages. It is in the dreams of millennium-makers only that the growths of knowledge need not their appointed times and seasons.

In any case it was not possible men should observe that which was beyond the reach of sense: whether, for example, because the phenomena were outside the range of vision by

reason of their immense distances, as it was with the heavenly bodies before the invention of the telescope; or equally inaccessible by reason of their exceeding smallness, as it was with all that minute, subtile, and extremely active region of nature which the microscope has made known to us. How could they respond by any fit movement, real in act or ideal in thought, to that with which sense could not come into any sort of direct and intimate relation? Every fresh converse with new orders of facts and relations by artificial extension of the range and power of sense has been surely followed by a gradual modification of old notions and by the gradual development of a new order of conceptions. The tedious growth and solid worth of real knowledge of nature through observation and experience are in signal contrast with the easy fecundity and ephemeral brilliance of imaginative theories concerning it.

I go on now to inquire and consider what are the main causes of imperfect and erroneous observation and to summarize them briefly.

(*a*) The natural limitations or shortcomings of the senses. Men little reflect how limited is that which sense does or can reveal at the best. Were they to consider well that each sense perceives only its special impressions, and cannot perceive the impressions which affect another sense, they might realize better how very little it is which any sense and all the senses together can tell of the external world.

It is not defect of knowledge alone that has ensued from the shortcomings of sense; the defect has given rise to large and far-reaching positive error of thought as its natural consequence. Who can estimate the power and reach of erroneous belief which had its root in the exploded notion, so firmly held before the magnitude of the heavens was made known, that the earth was the centre of the universe? The geocentric theory of the universe went hand in hand with the anthropocentric theory of man as end and aim of creation. How many wrong notions, fallacious theories, ignorant conceits, have flowed from the crude notion of matter, which, conceiving it as gross and inert, precluded the least conception of the nature and movements of its infinitely minute and active

molecules? When it is said that matter cannot possibly think, the meaning of the proposition to one who entertains the vulgar notion only of gross inert matter is widely different from what it is to him who, informed by adequate previous study, can conceive how intensely active and subtile are its molecular energies, and realize how its energies rise in concentration and dignity as it attains to higher and higher complexity of organization.

The medical science of the present day, in so far as it approaches exactness, is largely based upon the minute observation of phenomena in provinces of nature that were long inaccessible to human sense. Instead, therefore, of the demons which were once thought to be the causes of diseases and to require to be exorcized, and instead of the almost equally imaginary vital spirits and humours which succeeded to the demons when they were discredited, the patient microscopist traces and makes known the life-histories of the minute organisms which he demonstrates to be the real causes of many diseases; and by taking scrupulous pains to keep wounds free from septic germs, or by exorcizing antiseptically, so to speak, the germs that get into them, the surgeon has discovered that he can prevent putrefaction, and thus undertake successful performances of surgery not dreamt of in former times. From fictions of imagination to facts of observation—such has been the history of the birth and growth of stable medical knowledge, as of other natural knowledge; and such, we may be sure, is the path of future progress in those nebulous regions of nature where the supernatural has not yet been resolved into positive knowledge. As in past time, so in time to come, new developments of thought and new powers over nature may be expected to follow the inventions of means by which the senses can penetrate into regions hitherto impenetrable.

(*b*) Next in order to the want of means of observation is the want of opportunities of observation.

It is obvious that he who has not the opportunity is practically as ill placed for forming a sound conclusion as he who has not the means of observing; to want the opportunity is to want the use of means. The miracle takes place promptly

when those who witness it are forbidden, either by external hindrance or by the sometimes stronger barrier of internal prohibitive scruple, to make a thorough and searching examination of all the circumstances attending its occurrence. Out of question, Voltaire was quite right when he said that magic words are capable of destroying a whole flock of sheep—if the incantation be accompanied with a sufficient dose of arsenic; and, after the event, there will be no doubt of the miracle in the mind of the awe-stricken observer who has not seen more of the performance than the magic ceremonies. A person may rise from the grave after being buried alive for some days (as the Indian fakir does) when rigorous means are not taken to ensure that he is buried completely; and witnesses shall vouch solemnly that they have seen the thing happen whose sincerity as witnesses is as unquestionable as their incompetence as observers.* A credible eye-witness in any such matter is a witness who is not only qualified by natural aptitude and acquired training to make the special observation, but who possesses the means, uses all the expedients, and exhausts the opportunities of investigation. Many miracles have taken place in times past, as the

* A collection of cases of the kind, obtained directly from, and vouched for by, British officers who had been eye-witnesses of them, is given by Mr. Braid in his *Observations on Trance or Human Hybernation* (1850). In one case the man was buried for six weeks; in another for ten days, the grave being strictly guarded. But the result is sometimes disastrous when the proper precautions are not taken to make the miracle a success. For example, a weaver, who undertook to remain buried during the whole period of the Mahometan fast, was dead when taken out. And a Mahometan priest, who, in order to increase his reputation for sanctity, dug for himself a small cave underground, into which he retired, the top of the cave being then covered with boards and earth, was taken out dead, although he had taken the proper precaution to put a hollow bamboo through the covering in order to prevent suffocation.—*The Medical Jurisprudence of India*, p. 656, by DR. NORMAN CHEVERS.

It is not quite admitted, however, that the performances are entirely frauds. The fakirs, who are neurotic subjects, are said to put themselves through a regular course of training before the performance, weakening themselves by semi-starvation, taking certain vegetable substances, keeping their bodies motionless for hours, etc. Then, lying down, they profess to fall into a state of trance, a self-induced hypnotic condition, in which they imagine that their soul has rejoined the soul of the world. The question is (if question it deserves to be) whether the ostentatious preparations are not part of the machinery of the fraud.

miraculous liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius takes place regularly once a year still, because the true causes of the event were not critically looked for in a rightly sceptical spirit. The difficulty in such cases is not to prevent adequate observation; the difficulty is to incite men to it. The event strikes the mind with a pleasing awe, wonder winning assent; but it is pain and labour to hold assent in abeyance in order to make a scrupulous and tedious examination of all the antecedent and accompanying conditions of its occurrence.

Why does wonder win assent? First, because wonder, like other emotions, craves for and embraces gladly that which agrees with and is fitted to nourish it. Secondly, because man, being in relations of knowledge with so small a part of nature compared with the vast extent thereof lying beyond any such relations, but with which nevertheless he is in relations of being—for the bounds of knowledge are nowise the bounds of being—feels instinctively that there are many more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in his philosophy; wherefore his natural attitude of mind is that of awe-struck humility and vague dread of unforeseen events. This anxious mood of trembling expectation is exploited by the miracle and the miracle-monger, who abuses a child-like humility of faith; intimidated belief, without any resource of knowledge behind it, being overwhelmed and captured by bold assertion.

If an event happen mysteriously, as things must happen mysteriously where there is next to no knowledge of the laws of their natural happening, and especially when it happens under the auspices of those who are credited with secret communion with the supernatural, what is a mind prostrate in abject awe and urged instinctively to fix itself in some sort of definite notion, to do but to wonder and believe? It is not qualified to search out the causes and conditions of the occurrence; and it dares not itself directly approach those dread mysterious powers of which an interposing and interested priesthood, claiming the sacred office of indispensable mediator, professes to interpret the wishes, to assuage the wrath, to propitiate the favour. Always, too, it is more comfortable to be settled in the acceptance of the foolishest

fable than to suffer the pains of perplexity and the pangs of uncertain apprehension. Thus the interests of those who profit by ignorance combine with the fears of the trembling dupes to prohibit inquiry and to keep up the mystery.

Moreover, there are other supporting factors. First, the number of opportunities in the world for coincidences is practically infinite; very singular and striking ones, well fitted to make a strong impression of mysterious fatality, are met with from time to time; therefore the imposing authority of these remarkable coincidences operates unconsciously, or is designedly used, to strengthen the opinion and feeling of supernatural agency. Then, again, to discredit a popular religious belief is an offence to the feeling and an imputation on the understanding of the majority; for which reason few persons care to shock the common social sense and to incur the penalties of infidelity by speaking the unwelcome truth outright and openly. So the belief is protected from attack and enjoys the privilege of sanctuary from criticism.

(*c*) A third cause of error of observation may be set down as the want of the habit of observation.

A want of habit is really the want of the capacity of observation; for although one person has a better natural aptitude to observe than another, yet no one can observe well in any province of nature without training by practice, any more than he can ride or dance well without having had practical lessons in riding or dancing. Habit is acquired faculty, function-made structure—structural knowledge or instruction, that is—and thereafter the automatic and easy performance of acts which were performed at first only by conscious labour and perfecting efforts. Exact observation in any special province of science implies the organized power and aptitude to bring, on all necessary occasions, related ideas to bear upon the subject under observation, so as to illume it in all its aspects; and this not with labouring consciousness, but almost automatically. Not only must the related ideas be acquired by observation and reflection, but the habit of applying them, which is power of attention, must be cultivated by practice. Then it is the direct intending of mind to the object, as with a close cerebral reflex grasp, whereby this is

apprehended firmly: an internal power which serves and in a sense constrains in all cases, even when the subject is not itself fitted to kindle a particular interest. Withal must be conjoined therewith a habit of strict mental veracity—that is to say, a sincere resolution to see the thing as it is on all occasions, at whatever cost to prejudice or feeling, and not to go a step in assent beyond the measure of the evidence: a heart as well as an eye for the truth. So the best habit of mind for the discovery of truth is formed.

Here a brief consideration may be given to the nature of attention. Psychologists commonly use the term as if they meant by it a separate faculty of mind which it had the power of setting to work or not; and even those among them who think of attention as the voluntary direction of consciousness in a particular channel imply a sort of abstract power of thus turning consciousness at will wherever its services may be wanted. The right question for answer at the outset is whether there is any general faculty of attention at all—whether such a supposed faculty is not a mere notion. The truth is that there are actually as many particular attentions as there are particular subjects of attention, and no attention is ever more than a particular attitude of mind, or of that portion of the mind which is active on the particular occasion. The attentive eye, ear, or thought is the eye, ear, or thought then specially and exactly attent or intent. The mind has no more power of being brought to bear on a subject by a preliminary direction of consciousness than the body has of leaping a ditch by sending its shadow before it; for if the shadow chance to go before it, owing to the sun's relative place in the heavens at the time, it does so, not from any motion of its own, but because it is propelled by the already moving body, and moves forward only and exactly in proportion as this moves. So is it with the direction of consciousness as a process of attention. Let any one who suffers the acute pangs of a bad toothache have his body burned with a red-hot iron, he no longer feels his toothache; however great his power of attention he is not able to attend to that pain, for the greater pain usurps his consciousness. Beneath the mental there is an essential physical process; and in the precedent order of

events there, the result must plainly be just as necessary as the disappearance of one when it is converted into another mode of motion.

If two persons of equal general understanding read the same book, the one interested in the subject of it because he has made a pursuit of its study, the other knowing and caring little about the subject—how easy the power of attention to the one, how difficult to the other! And how many more and deeper meanings do the words suggest and convey to the instructed person! He can see the principles, follow the conclusions, perceive the relations, foresee the objections, which the words suggest; to the ignorant person they are little more than dead words awakening no such subtile and complex responses—seeds which, sown on unsuitable ground, come to nothing there. That is to say, that when the spur of an interest in the subject can be applied, attention is enkindled instantly and the least hint of a meaning in the phenomena keenly seized. No exertion of will made to compel attention to an uninteresting subject can equal the attraction with which an interesting subject holds it against the will. Thus it is that a person observes sharply in a matter which touches his interest who cannot observe at all where his feelings are not engaged: a savage is minutely and intelligently observant of the scarcely perceptible signs by which to find a way through the pathless forest, who to the end of his life cannot make much less difficult observations not solicited by his needs.* How, indeed, can there be a response within to the impression from without when there is nothing within to respond in concurrence with that which is without? Inattention is then insusceptibility; wherefore to require attention would be much like asking of the eye, which is susceptible only to light-waves, that it attend to sound-waves, and of the ear, which is susceptible only to sound-waves, that it attend to light-waves.

* It is a common opinion, not without foundation, that the female mind is commonly insusceptible to the force of the cool arguments by which the right and wrong of a matter in which it is keenly interested are dispassionately set forth; but it is particularly susceptible to the reasons that are congenial to feelings, and exhibits, therefore, a marvellously acute and seemingly instinctive intuition in a case where the right feeling in relation to the object or circumstances fitly informs or, so to speak, attunes the mind.

In order to have an interest in a subject there must be an attraction to it, either by reason of native or of acquired organization of brain; attractive interest implying apt structuralization of thought and feeling. That many persons have many interests and attractions in common is a matter of course; for they are similarly constituted, born and bred in similar circumstances, carefully manufactured to common patterns in similar moulds of experience, breathe a common social atmosphere, and live a common social life. A common type of mental organization is the inevitable result. But inasmuch as there are manifold special pursuits, and numberless occasions and varieties of experiences in the inexhaustible conditions which the world presents, it results that various minds have still their various interests and special developments following the original natural aptitudes of the particular brains. These innate differences of mental organization make attention comparatively easy to one person, even from his cradle, in a case where it may be difficult to another, and so, by an elective affinity, determine and direct the growths of the special facets into the maturities of leading faculties. Obviously, then, attention is nowise so purely voluntary and abstract a matter as common psychological language implies.

It is convenient to describe attention as of two kinds—namely, (*a*) voluntary and (*b*) automatic, according as the power by which it is applied comes mainly from behind (is a *vis a tergo* pushing it to the subject), or as it comes from in front (is a *vis a fronte* drawing it to the subject); for the distinction answers to certain broad features of its exercise. But it is not an exact and deep-reaching division, seeing that intermediate instances make a gradual transition from automatic to voluntary function. Every act of attention, even the most voluntary, presupposes an antecedent interest or attraction. When any one fixes his attention, by a strong and steady effort of will, on a subject which has little interest to him, he does it, not directly and independently, but by means of intermediate related ideas which, having been made his by previous experience, have an interest for him. Brought in face of the object or phenomenon, he does not straightway pass it by without further heed—he resolutely marks and minds it.

Why? For the reason that, occurring amongst phenomena in which he is interested in some degree—whereby, in fact, his notice of it is solicited in the first instance—he deliberately asks himself what relations it has to them, if it has any, or what relations it has not to them, if it has none; so he attends closely to it.* In the one case it draws and fixes attention by help of reinforcing ideas, they radiating their light upon it, as it were, so as to make it and its affinities bright and distinct in consciousness; in the other case it attracts and fixes attention through the interest which there is in demonstrating the absence of relations where relations seem to be, being focussed in consciousness by the aid of ideas with which it claims affinities that it has no right to.

In scientific inquiry the bold and positive enunciation of a wrong theory serves better to provoke attention than the quiet hint of a probability or the modest suggestion of a directing question, albeit the latter is the more sound and honest course when a positive theory is not warranted by the state of knowledge. By boldly assigning to the subject of inquiry relations which it has not, the theory obtains an introduction and an interest which it would not have were it left unrelated; and the inquiries provoked thereby, though they end by exposing its falsity, prove none the less useful sometimes, either to discover new truths or to test and strengthen the

* The Chinese owe their numerous discoveries in agriculture to their eminently observant character in such matters, in which their greatest men, and even their emperors, are interested. The following example shows well the difference between seeing and observing—simply seeing and seeing intelligently. The celebrated emperor Khang-hi was walking in some rice-fields one day, when he happened to notice a rice-plant that had already come into ear; it rose above all the rest, and was already ripe, although it had only been planted six months, and the harvest was not expected till the ninth. "I had it gathered and brought to me; the grain was very fine and full, and I was induced to keep it as an experiment, and see whether it would in the following year retain this precocity; and, in fact, it did. All the plants that proceeded from it came into ear before the ordinary time, and yielded their harvest in the sixth moon. Every year has multiplied the produce of the preceding, and now for thirty years it has been the rice served on my table. . . . It is the only kind that can ripen north of the Great Wall, where the cold begins very early and ends very late; but in the provinces of the south, where the climate is milder, and the soil more fertile, it is easy to obtain two harvests a year from it; and it is a sweet consolation to me to have procured this advantage for my people." —Abbé Huc's *Chinese Empire*, vol. ii. p. 311.

foundations of old truths. This also has to be taken into account—that all things being bound together, nearly or remotely, in the universe, an idea not entirely false, once it has obtained settlement in the mind, becomes a centre to which associations form gradually, as increasing experience widens and sharpens observation and extends and develops reflection; the unrelated thus becoming by degrees more and more related, and in the end, perhaps, the centre of a group of associations that prove to be of the greatest service in bridging a chasm of thought between separate groups of ideas. It is like bringing into complete and regular intercommunication, by means of a new railway with its suitable network of branches, separate parts of the country which, though well served with their several railways, have been cut off from one another hitherto by the absence of means of direct communication; or—a more appropriate comparison perhaps in this connection—it is like a happy conception in the case of some mechanical invention, by the application of which, clumsy and roundabout contrivances being got rid of, it is usefully simplified and immensely improved.

A new invention of any kind by which human powers are largely increased is essentially an improvement upon nature by nature, for it is a further development of it through human nature. In it relations that are diffused and widely separate in things are brought into a close proximity in ideas; being collected within a narrow compass where they can be submitted to different combinations and interactions which they would not take spontaneously in nature, they are thus interrogated, tried, and adapted experimentally to definite ends. It is the concentration, so to speak, of extensive into intensive, the getting of quantity and quality in miniature: the epitomizing of gravitation and other natural forces, and of the accumulated labours of successive generations of men, within the structure and compass of a small machine.

As the mathematician uses algebraic symbols, combining and arranging them according to the relations of the symbols themselves, without thinking of their meaning during the process, to work out results which, when achieved, he can easily translate into thought and use deductively; so men use ideas

of the mind independently of external things and their relations, making and unmaking all sorts of combinations and interactions of them, to work out results which, when they proceed from a sound basis after a right method, are found sometimes to be valuable deductions that guarantee prediction and forestall observation. Obtaining a stock of sound notions by induction from true observation of things, they go on then to derive, from the manipulation of the notions themselves in reflection, theories or deductions which, when tested by application, are found to be true of things not ever observed actually: it is a sort of experimenting in the mental laboratory with the essences or principles of things. A man must think as well as look in order to see, for he sees not with his eye but through it; happy, therefore, is he who, when he begins to look, has in his mind a true theory, explicit or implicit. Peradventure he may be beholden much to happy prejudice.

No more need be said now in order to prove how much an attention, whether voluntary or automatic, owes to training and habit. Not the habit of observing one thing or doing one thing exclusively, whereby men become automatic and go on in unvarying rounds of thought and feeling, like so many organic machines, falling really into a routine of not observing or not doing other things, but the habit of intending the mind closely to any subject of study—the habit, that is, of truly minding it by holding and using all related ideas to throw light upon it. So only will that habit which is the power of attention grow and become easy. A good habit for the curious inquirer to form would be a sceptical habit of asking why a common observation may be not a true observation, an accepted conclusion not a sound conclusion—the rare habit of daring to doubt and the still rarer habit of seeing things sincerely and clearly as they are in themselves without regard to opinions of them: for it is the custom of opinion to descend unquestioned from generation to generation, and most things continue to be believed by most people only because they have been said authoritatively and accepted mechanically, out of a passive acquiescence in received opinion and a disinclination or disability to question that which has been sanctioned by time and authority.

Be that as it may, when we consider the number and developments of the several sciences, how much time and pains must be given to master the details of a single science, and how little time and pains the majority of persons can give to anything but the supply of their daily wants and the common business of their lives, it is evident how natural and general bad observation and error of thought must be in matters that lie altogether outside the accustomed ruts of thought and action. The multitude will always take its opinions from custom and tradition and on the authority of others. But even in matters of common belief, which any one might test for himself, most persons get and hold their opinions in the same mechanical way; they are ignorant of the proofs on which these rest and by which they are established, know not the alphabet of observation, have not the least notion what proof is, neither contribute value to an opinion nor guarantee value in it by reason of their holding it. The consent of the majority is no warrant that the opinion of the majority is wise; the multitude, being mainly foolish, have always held to the wrong opinion until dragged out of it by the labours of the few who differed.* In complex matters of research, where certitude is unattainable and judgment has to be held in suspense, all the more when urgent personal interests demand the stay and support of something definite, being impatient of uncertainty and eager for assurance, they flee for refuge to dogmatic authority of one kind or another—to revealers of the will of the supernatural, to omen-mongers, to quacks and charlatans, and to like pretenders to secret and certain communion with the counsels of creation.†

* The original and real meaning of the saying that the *vox populi* was the *vox Dei* was not that the voice of the people was right, but that it was divine in the same sense in which the words of idiots were once treated reverently as having a divine or prophetic significance. Another opinion, quoted by Seneca, was that the assent of the multitude was presumption or proof of the wrong side (*Argumentum pessimi turba*).—CORNWALL LEWIS, on *Authority in Matters of Opinion*.

† The medical practitioner who treats his patient with unfailing decision and dogmatic assurance inspires more confidence often, although he may know little or nothing of medicine, than the most learned physician who betrays any of the uncertainty and hesitation which a real knowledge of the case perhaps demands. Hence the great success of the charlatan, who, perceiving that men insist upon

Those who exult in the modern diffusion of knowledge and brag of the enlightenment of the age little think how small is the minority of men on whom the boasted progress depends actually; how entirely the intellectual possessions of the race have been and are gained and maintained by the few; how little real knowledge the vast majority has, and how mechanical that little is. The extinction of a few hundred persons in a generation who keep the torch of knowledge burning in Christendom would bring progress to a standstill, and might throw the world back into intellectual barbarism in the course of two or three generations; all the more easily because, besides the passive resistance of a dead weight of ignorance, there is a vast and powerful organization of hostile superstition watching and working to stop intellectual progress.

So also with the aspirations and the endeavours to realize a high moral ideal: it is not the many, but a select few, who keep that flame alive in the human heart through the ages; and they do it by spending themselves in the vast waste of selfishness for the good of their kind. Benefactors and often at the same time martyrs of humanity, they carry the banner of the ideal, creating and keeping fresh a social atmosphere by which the morals of the many are inspired and sustained; these for the most part resting only on the frail structures of tradition, custom, law, and opinion, the real moral strength of which is sometimes discovered with dismay, when severely tested, to be much less than on all hands was tacitly assumed. When the startling disclosure of the actual weakness is made, there arises loud social clamour on all sides at an extraordinary and unnatural event, a horrified amazement at the unexpected outburst of the brute within the man, followed soon by an eager and general self-conservative conspiracy silently to cover and ignore it, and by indignant reprobation of any one who, wanting in respect for conventional reticences, frankly exposes the sore and expounds its significance.* A just appreciation

being beguiled and ordered, acts the part demanded of him. He does good too sometimes, since a ray of inspired hope or a gleam of joy may hearten the patient much, animating his organic energies beneficially.

* Not without good reason, too, since the conventional hypocrisies of civilization, by keeping up the show and belief of morality, have their good uses—to preserve in being the ideal; there could be no hypocrisies were there no

of these truths might properly abate the surprise which outbreaks of superstitious credulity, of heartless selfishness, of gross sensuality, of savage cruelty, occasion from time to time in civilized countries; for it is not necessary to make a deep cut into the culture of civilization in order to discover the underlying ignorance, selfishness, and brutality of the human animal.

(*d*) Under the head of *bias* may be included the several active causes of fallacies of observation and reasoning which have their origin in the feelings—in the various affections, wishes, interests, passions, prejudices, fears, and tempers of human nature.

The common notion is that men get their opinions through the understanding and hold them because they are based on sound reason. Far from it: the understanding is one avenue of opinion, but another more open and more used, though disavowed, is through the feelings; the opinions so obtained demanding only from reason so much of its help as serves to excuse and support them. It is a plausible but quite false presumption that mankind in general act on rational principles. A fundamental fact of man's nature, as of all living nature, is the desire to be happy and to pursue and embrace those things which, being agreeable, make it happy; the consequence of which is a natural propensity to embrace and believe opinions that suit with desires, and to reject and disbelieve opinions that go contrary to desires. There is a vast difference between the *kind* or *quality* of the belief when it goes with, and when it goes against, desire.

To contemplate a subject in the pure white light of knowledge, without any intermixture of feeling to colour perception, is pretty nigh impossible; and the stronger the feeling which tinctures the reflection, the more powerful it is as a factor in the determination of belief. It is a better way of persuasion to awaken sympathetic feeling for the weak argument than to present an irrefutable argument to an unsympathetic mind;

morality, and it would be a dangerous thing, as Pascal says, to let man know and show that he is animal, without at the same time making him feel and know how much higher than animal he is also. In the positive evil of the life-struggle it is his conscious prerogative to set up an ideal goal of good.

and always the most successful way to compel belief is to kindle the congenial passion. A strong passion, by securing beforehand the suitable disposition in the individual, predisposes him to embrace and believe what is fitted to feed it. How can assimilation fail to take place when the impression from without falls into such unison with the activity within? How not agree when they are so mutually agreeable? A timid person readily believes that which greatly alarms him; the awe-struck person, what excites his awe; a suspicious person, that which jumps with his mood of suspicion; an angry person, that which seems to justify his anger to himself; a jealous person, whatsoever is in the least suited, or can anyhow be used, to feed jealousy. Always the passion, attracting congenial and reinforcing, repelling uncongenial and opposing ideas, fascinates in greater or less degree. It is only afterwards, when its tremors of activity subside, and consciousness is released from attendance on it and its ministering ideas, that uncongenial ideas have a chance of so coming into reflection as to be attended to.

The ideal mind for the search of truth would be a mind so free from passion as to admit of a pure love of truth for truth's sake. But that is not a possible state of perfection. Such a mind could not love truth or anything else. A pure lover of truth, which everybody desires or professes to be, but which nobody is, would be an abstraction, not a real person; just as truth itself is. In any and every case the real thing is the particular lover of the particular truth on the particular occasion. And when descent is made from the simplicity of free abstractions to the complexities of concrete individuals we find that each person is himself, not any one else, having his special likings and dislikings, his times and seasons, his moods and inclinations; that these differ in different persons, in numberless relations to the multitudinous qualities of objects and changes of events, and even in the same person at different times and places; and that the notion of what is adequate proof to constrain assent is at bottom much affected by the personal peculiarity or idiosyncrasy. To every one in the end the world is what he thinks it, certitude what he believes of it at the time, and his belief, by virtue

of its relativity, necessarily false or at any rate in default. In no case of a concrete conclusion is the assent, perhaps, a pure rational assent; that is, an assent into which no surplusage of assurance enters from some other affection than the love of truth. The passions occasion so many coloured refractions of the white ray of truth; they are necessarily inconsistent with the unity of it.

In view, then, of the manifold varieties of human feelings, of their extremely subtile and devious workings, and of the numerous and complex circumstances in which they work, it is obviously impossible to enumerate and expound the divers secret and circuitous ways in which they act to bias observation and thought, or to construct a complete grammar of persuasion, a systematic logic of feeling, which might set forth in full detail how so to act in relation to them respectively as to obtain assent. Nevertheless, it is a sort of knowledge which the acute man of the world, who, himself unmoved, moves and uses men for his ends, manages to acquire and employ instinctively in a crude way. It shall suffice here to note their general effects, without attempting to pursue their special operations in the intimate recesses of individual character; to consider the effects of the main stream of emotion, without embarking on a hopeless investigation of the many turns and windings of its meandering course. Perhaps the day will come when all the various intonations and moods of feeling, with their several necessary organic conditions, will be accurately discriminated and described, and their effects on perception and thought set forth mathematically; but that day is yet far off.

It is in the emotion caused by a natural event so rare as to excite wonder, and so extraordinary as to seem supernatural, that we have the reason of the ease with which superstitious explanations of it are accepted. Observation is impossible, and the reeling mind, loosed from its moorings in familiar experience, its old patterns of perception staggered, drifts without bearings for a time, bewildered, overawed, and tremulously apprehensive; not in such complete darkness of blank ignorance as leaves the lowest savage in stupid quiet of mind, but with just so much glimmering light of dawning knowledge as makes

"darkness visible" and terrible; in a very apt mood of intimidation, therefore, to believe anything of the extraordinary occurrence. Is not apprehensive expectation the natural mental mood of a being who from his birth has to fight for his life against hostile powers and in the end to lose it?* There is a self-protective instinct of mind to make the overwhelming indefiniteness into something definite, to attach it somehow to the mental being; thus only is it possible to think and act in relation to it. Imagination is easily believed, therefore, when it goes to work, as it does instantly, to fill the void with superstitious explanations that are in keeping with the state of feeling and intellectual development of the race at the time and place.

Note, in this relation, how vulgar astonishment at the narration of some extraordinary event disposes to belief in it—mentally as well as physically there is gaping wonder, open-mouthed to swallow the pleasing marvel; and how prone is the narrator himself, flattered by the admiring wonder which his tale evokes and seduced by his vanity, to increase the astonishment, to supplement its defects, to exaggerate its points, to embellish its features, and to end by believing his own exaggeration! Certainly stories of the supernatural at the present day owe a main part of their authority to this cause of fallacy—to wonder-struck assent and inexact narration of inexact observation.†

In the natural effect of an emotion to attract connatural ideas, getting strength and support from them and reacting to give strength and support to them, we perceive how much it may contribute to the success or failure of an enterprise started under its auspices. The hope and belief are ofttimes half the battle of success; fear and foreboding of failure the sure means to invite failure. Enthusiastic trust in the commander by his

* And "vanity of vanities," the inevitable final cry, if he can think beyond the appetites and desires of his nature.

† After pointing out the advantage which the promulgation of a new doctrine obtains when it excites wonder, Dr. South, in one of his sermons, says, "Had not Christ, therefore, ushered in His religion by miracle and wonder, and arrested men's first apprehensions of it by something grand and supernatural, He had hindered its progress by a disadvantageous setting forth, exposed it naked to infidelity, and rendered it first disreputable, and then despised."

See note at the end of chapter.

troops magnetically attracts and holds the units to one definite pole of victorious purpose, infusing every soldier with the energy to accomplish it, whereas distrust of him distracts, scatters, and enervates them. Coleridge, speaking of the retreat of Napoleon from Moscow, says that the Russians baffled his imperial forces because, having faith in St. Nicholas, they were inaccessible to the imaginary forces bred of the superstition of his destinies; and that the English in the Peninsula overcame the real, because they set at defiance and had heard of only to despise the imaginary, powers of the great emperor.* An ill omen at the outset of an important enterprise may ensure the ill event and establish its own credit by the depressing and discouraging feelings and notions which it begets, while a good omen, inspiring hope and energy, with their corresponding sanguine notions and fertile combinations of notions, does much to fulfil itself. To the ancient Greeks a propitious answer of one of the three great oracles was indispensable for the inauguration (a good *augury*) of a new colonial enterprise; it infused the hope and energy necessary to contend with the early difficulties of the young colony; whereas an unpropitious answer, weighting the undertaking with the fear of supernatural hostility, could not fail to lame or paralyze spirit and energy. There was, then, an induction of real experience in the superstition that the omen or oracle was a divine forecast which it was a man's business to understand and respect; on that base of truth it rested, as also oftentimes, without doubt, on the wisdom of the secret counsel which cunningly inspired the oracular utterance.

In like manner prophecies, presentiments, imprecations, magic incantations, predictions of witchcraft, and the like, have wrought their own accomplishment: a person has died, and that not simply as a singular coincidence, on the day it was predicted or he had a presentiment he should die; an incantation has taken fatal effect when the victim has known of and feared it; a curse has been a self-fulfilling fate when it has worked powerfully on the imagination of its subject; the physician who inspires faith and hope in his patient does more

* *Lay Sermons.* The Duke of Wellington said something of the kind of himself. See CROKER'S *Memoirs.*

to cure him sometimes by a few harmless simples than another, unable to produce any such inspiriting effect, can do with the most fit and costly remedies. Prediction is, in the nature of things, a vastly different thing when applied to human events from what it ever is when applied to physical events: in the latter it is a passive process of simple foresight; in the former it is mind working actively on mind, so powerfully too perhaps as to fulfil itself.

Once the belief was fixed that events were pre-omened in any way from on high, there was no association of them too trivial to portend good or bad fortune. Ignorant folk sought and found omens everywhere, and shrewder persons, seeing and seizing their advantage, made clever use of them to serve their purposes; the essential fact of the process not being the trivial occurrence that was associated with a good or bad result, but the mental state of animating hope or paralyzing fear which it engendered.* Here, then, we behold an instance of a mighty edifice of error built on the basis of defective observation, which, overlooking the real causes of events, drew from imagination a plentiful supply of fictitious causes.

In the pride and impatience which resent the limitations of knowledge, and revolt against the slow method of its attainment by patient conforming to facts, there is a deep and lasting source of error. Man would fain be above nature, not as its culmination and crown, but as something essentially apart, a being created to govern and use it for his ends and for whom it was created, instead of, as he is actually, a part of it that develops from and in and for it, and in the end conquers

* Hence various modes of *divination*—that is, of deducing inferences with regard to the future from one or other of the sources sanctioned by superstition. *Oneiromancy* was the mode of prophecy founded on dreams; *cheiromancy*, the art of predicting a man's fortune by the lines of his hand; *ornithomancy*, the mode of predicting events from the flight of birds; *necromancy*, the prophecy founded on the answer obtained from spirits of the dead. And long after these modes of divining had lost their credit recourse was had to the opening of some book, such as Virgil or the Bible, at random, the words that chanced first to meet the eye being accepted as omens (*Sortes Virgilianæ* and *Sortes Biblicæ*). Pious persons at one time found mighty comfort and help in such use of the Bible, of which they have been pitilessly bereaved by modern theologians; they sought and found in the chance-passages the intimations of divine guidance. John Wesley had frequent and comfortable recourse to this method of divination.

only by obeying. He cannot quietly wait for the slow growth of natural knowledge through gradually made closer interactions with things, but is ever tempted to anticipate sound conclusions by speculative intuitions from the high and special personal station which he usurps for himself, or by revelations which he claims and professes to receive from a higher source than sense and reason. Believing that a noble spirit is grossly imprisoned in a vile body, he persuades himself that, rightly invoked, it will find a way to utter oracles to him through its prison walls. Experience is shirked or slurred where experience ought to be rigorous and sincere; an arrogant impatience of research granted free play where the difficulties of observation make patient and painstaking search essential to the discovery of truth; a supreme confidence in self allowed full swing of imaginative invention where a modest subordination of self is alone suited to woo Nature's confidence and to discover her secrets.

As he once declared the earth to be the centre of the universe round which the whole system of the heavens turned, persecuting as blasphemers those who ventured to call the ridiculous dogma in question, so man still imagines himself to be the supreme aim of the universe of things, the end for which the whole creation has groaned and travailed through countless ages, and groans and travails still. Capable of imagining that of himself, of what magnitude of error is he incapable? From such exalted mental station, and in a mood of feeling so estranged from nature and so adverse to the method and aim of true knowledge of it, it is not possible for him to see things truly as they are. He cannot help going wrong, mentally as well as physically, so long as, being a part of nature, he is apart from it, not wholly and sincerely of it. To maintain himself on this preposterous pinnacle he must needs claim, in some sort of supernatural intuition or divine inspiration, a special source of knowledge answering to his lofty conceit of himself, and assume his aspirations to be pledge and premonition of their future fulfilment. As he creates God in the image of his understanding, so he creates a future life for himself after the desires of his heart, his egoism here craving a corresponding satisfaction hereafter. It is the self-conservative

instinct of an individuality which, being alive, likes to go on living.

With the individual, as with the race, an undisciplined egoism acts to fix a false mental standpoint, and thus to vitiate observation and lead thought astray. Every one loves his own opinions, because they are his own, better than the opinions in which he has no sense of private possession, just as he dislikes not such odours of his own body as would be most offensive coming from another person's body. There is always the steady bias springing necessarily from the fact of individuality. But it is when self-esteem is inflamed into passion—anger, hatred, jealousy, avarice, pride, or the like—that it forms the strongest bar to the admission of pure truth. These passions, being constituent parts of human nature, cannot be eliminated from it entirely; they work their ill effect to pervert observation and judgment, whatever the province of human labour; it is in vain to expect to get rid of them, even in the high regions of philosophy and in the dry regions of science, where they might be thought to have the least scope. One philosopher or scientific observer, jealous of the reputation of another who is working in the same field of labour, sees no truth or merit in the discovery made by him, ignoring or disdaining it, though it be a very excellent discovery. In such mood of scornful antipathy he may remain as long as he lives, blinded by prejudice. But if the discovery makes way by growth of the evidence in its favour, so that it cannot be ignored, then he appropriates it more or less consciously, persuading himself that there was nothing new in it, or that he has come to it independently and owes no obligation in the matter. Had the progress of knowledge depended upon the labours of two or three persons at work on the same subjects in the same country it might have come to an early standstill, so great is the impeding and perverting play of envious passion. Happily, among the multitude of workers in different places and countries and times, the jealousy or prejudice of one inquirer is met somewhere by an active counter-prejudice which has a neutralizing effect, and so out of the conflict of passions truth peradventure comes by its own. In any case, the uncrowned toiler has two ways of consolation open to

him: he may either hope, and be happy in the illusion, that the judgment of foreign nations and future ages will put matters right at last; or may reconcile himself to a place of oblivion in the noble army of unknown martyrs of humanity by whose modest labours its progress has for the most part been silently made.*

Observation is no less badly vitiated by sympathetic emotion, though in a different way. Consider how powerfully admiration, pity, and love predispose respectively to see what is admirable, to find what is deserving, to believe what is good, in the object of the feeling. Every passion naturally wishes to keep itself alive, and therefore eagerly lays hold of what feeds it. Love is proverbially blind because, seeing in its object that which it desires to see, it cannot see that which contradicts the bent of its passion; the lover infatuated because, transported out of his reason and seduced out of his senses by his passion, his observation and judgment are fatuous. Hence Plato justly included love under one sort of mania, and Shakespeare soberly describes the lover as of imagination compact with the lunatic and the poet. Moreover, as with love so with every other passion; blinding in proportion as it is engrossing, it signifies a polarization of all the molecules of the being to its object, whereby of necessity they cannot turn freely towards other objects to see and think them adequately. When the Christian Messiah foretold that false messiahs or prophets should arise in the latter days and work miracles, He foresaw and declared that they would lead many astray, because astonishment notoriously precludes critical observation and judgment, and makes belief easy. In the main it is true that the grosser the admiring wonder the coarser is the deception which escapes detection. How believe that love and adoration of Christ's person, supreme admiration of His self-devotion, pity unspeakable for His painful passion and ignominious death, grief and shame for the world's awful ingratitude—that such feelings throughout Christendom can be without effect to bias judgment

* He may perhaps be included some day in a scientific Festival of All Saints, should science bethink itself to appoint a day of celebration of the nameless dead who have wrought silently and spent themselves in its service; or to raise a monument to them, as the Athenians raised an altar to "unknown Gods."

concerning His character and the events of His mission? Bias so tremendous, yet so impotent, might justly match any one of the mighty miracles done during His brief career.

It is notorious how strong and subtile a bias is given to observation and thought by wish, interest, or desire, and how hard a thing it is for the most judicial mind to go against its bias. The effect of a resolute and conscientious exercise of reason and will exactly to counteract the bias would almost certainly be to carry the judgment, by the momentum of the *nisus*, some way in the opposite direction beyond the straight line of truth; so consciously to stiffen the mental attitude as to make it unconsciously unjust. When two persons who have been witnesses of the same transaction swear to inconsistent or contradictory accounts of it, as not seldom happens, it is not usually that either of them is saying wilfully that which is not, but it is that each was so strongly biased by his wishes, interests, fears, or feelings as to see only that which was agreeable to them, or, in remembering the circumstances, to call effectively to mind only so much as suited with them. The agreements with his mood made a vivid impression and endured, the disagreements therefrom no impression, or so weak an impression that it was transient. Thus he has seen and thought what he wished, and embraced the conclusions which were grateful.*

Whoso, believing in the supernatural, is eager to see signs

* Was it bias of interest and wish, or was it a cunning device of St. Paul, when he mutilated and garbled the celebrated inscription on the altar at Athens? Erasmus is my authority, who says (*Praise of Folly*)—"Thus when that apostle saw at Athens the inscription of an altar, he draws from it an argument for the proof of the Christian religion; but, leaving out great part of the sentence, which perhaps, if fully recited, might have prejudiced his cause, he mentions only the two last words, viz., *To the unknown God;* and this too not without alteration, for the whole inscription runs thus: *To the Gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa, to all foreign and unknown Gods.*"

Not the only instance of misquotation by Paul for his present purpose. In citing from the Psalms the verse—"He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," as a positive *prediction* of Christ's ascension into heaven and his bestowal of spiritual gifts on men, he misquotes the text and perverts its plain meaning. Both in the Hebrew and in the Septuagint the real words are, *He received gifts from*-or *among men* (καὶ ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώποις): the customary offered gifts to a mighty earthly ruler such as the psalm obviously celebrates.

and wonders easily sees signs and wonders himself and promptly accepts the testimony of others who attest them: it is not a wonder that he sees wonders; the real wonder would be if, being what he is, he saw not as many as he fervently expected to see. Therefore, when it is objected to the sceptic, as an unanswerable argument, that men of unimpeachable veracity and in full possession of their senses have solemnly testified that they have witnessed supernatural phenomena, he may properly, before quitting his doubts and reserve, call to mind and weigh well this pregnant truth—that two would-be truthful persons, both of whom cannot be right, will sincerely give diverse or flatly contradictory accounts of the same transaction, which they had equal means and opportunities of observing. No doubt a gross instance of manifest bias, but none the less suited to incite reflection on the manifold finer instances of its permeating influence in daily life, where it works habitually in various subtile and circuitous ways. For example: when any one propounds a question for an opinion, he almost inevitably seduces or irritates, and so prejudices, by his way of telling his story, although he endeavour to avoid prejudice and to be scrupulously fair; even when he confines himself to a plain narration of the facts, he discloses, in spite of himself, minute signs in his manner, in the tones of his voice, in the expressions of his features, in his gestures or attitudes, which awaken responsive echoes of reinforcing or repelling feeling in his listener by a more subtile physics than we can yet comprehend. It is the tone, not the word, which stirs the deepest and most subtile vibrations of the being, and it is in tones of feeling, not in thought, that our deepest cosmic affinities thrill.

Whenever or wherever a supernatural event is announced the right initial attitude of mind to observe in regard to it is an attitude of stern scepticism, for so only will the tests applied to it and *all* the conditions of its occurrence be complete and rigorous. The natural reluctance to offend the pious feelings of others in such case by pushing inquiry home renders it necessary that the inquirer show no indulgence to his own feelings. He must begin his resolute scrutiny in the spirit of the indisputable truth that, while there is a strong antecedent

improbability of a supernatural event in any case, there is a strong antecedent probability of a bias in favour of wish in every case, and require the elimination or invalidation of so much of the weight of authority as the evidence owes to bias. Now, as this elimination is sometimes impracticable, the only safe course, when it cannot be made, is to reject the observation; for it will be impossible to determine truly whether it is the observation of a real thing or only the realization of a pious wish of the observer.

A favourite theological argument, still used as if it were incontestable, has always been that the desire of man for a perfect life after death, in which his own failures and the failure of retribution and recompense in this life shall be made good, is proof and pledge of his immortality. The desire would not have been implanted in his heart, it is argued, were it not an instinctive yearning destined to have fruition. Those who use the argument abuse it, for they habitually overstate its basis in two ways: first, they ascribe a universality to the desire, which it has not; secondly, they assume that where the desire exists it is a desire for a future life that shall be compensatory. This, again, is not true, seeing that many savages who think of a future life have not the least notion of recompense in it; on the contrary, they think of it as a continuance of the unequal dispensations of this life, the chief being a chief enjoying the good things, and the slave a slave suffering the evil things, there as here.

Let it be granted that the wish to rise again after death to a life eternal were universal, would that be the least warrant of so momentous an event to come? Is human craving in that case proof of manifest destiny? or is it the mere barren utterance of human egoism? Does the desire of the heart contain and reveal an implicit certitude which the understanding can add nothing to if it concur with it, and take nothing from if it dissent from it? Does the wish to live for ever carry any more weight of assurance simply as a wish than the wish to live to old age which ninety-nine persons out of a hundred have, but which only a few of them live to see fulfilled, and fewer still are much gratified to see fulfilled?

Instead of adding weight to the extrinsic evidence of a

future life, whatever that be worth, the immortal longing supplies a weight of intrinsic bias which ought, in conformity with the canons of right reasoning, to be subtracted from it. If not, the person can no more observe and weigh the evidence than the body or a part of the body engaged in the execution of a particular skilful movement of adaptation can execute another complex act of adaptation at the same time. The brain is not a single and simple organ acting wholly in each function: it is practically a confederation of organs in which, when one organ is in active function, another must be much or altogether in abeyance, not otherwise than as, in a council or parliament, while one member speaks the rest are silent. Every human being who has lived, is living, or shall live on earth may be destined to live through all eternity somewhere and somehow, meanly inhabited as eternity then might be; but there must be weightier reasons to warrant the belief than the mere human wish, if the belief is not to take rank among those inventions of imagination by which the heart seeks in the passionate throb of organic life for an assurance that is denied to it by the cold light of the understanding.

It is hardly possible for those who have not made a study of the subject to realize how many and great events have been thought, nay, seen, to happen, not because they ever did happen, but because of the strong wish and belief that they would happen. The intense expectation of the event excites a vivid idea or image of it, so that the image, not the reality, is seen and observation falsified. For example, it was a firmly rooted superstition at one time that the corpse of a murdered person would bleed afresh when the murderer was brought into its presence and made to touch it, and the experiment was repeatedly made with the successful result of obtaining the conclusive piece of damning evidence.* So late as the time

* Two respectable clergymen, for example, swore at a trial in the time of Charles I. (1628-29) that the body having been taken out of the grave and laid on the grass, thirty days after death, and one of the parties accused of murder required to touch it, "the brain of the dead began to have a dew or gentle sweat arise on it, which increased by degrees till the sweat ran down in drops on the face; the brow turned to a lively flesh-colour, and the deceased opened one of her eyes and shut it again; and this opening of the eye was done three several times; she likewise thrust out the ring or marriage finger three times,

when Dr. Cudworth wrote his learned treatise, it was the received opinion "that evil spirits or demons do sometimes really act upon the bodies of men by inflicting or augmenting bodily distempers or diseases." He entertained no doubt that some maniacal persons were demoniacs, who could discover secrets, declare things past and to come, and speak in languages which they had never learned; quoting in proof "an unquestionable instance" of a maniacal woman who, though she knew no language but her mother tongue, spoke to a stranger who was an Armenian in Armenian, and foretold future events correctly.* It is notorious that the circumstances following the burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth are differently narrated by the writers of the different Gospels, one point of signal disagreement being as to whether two angels were seen sitting in the empty sepulchre or whether only one sat there. Now, the person who is said to have seen the "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," was Mary Magdalene; a woman who, having once had seven devils cast out of her, we may justly suppose, if not to have been insane, to have had that kind of weak mental constitution, loose-knit and unstably balanced naturally, and further loosened by excitement, in which a vivid idea easily attains to such an intensity and separateness as to be seen as an actual image. Running to the sepulchre early in the morning, eager and anxious, and finding the sepulchre open and the body of Jesus gone—in fulfilment of His declaration that, after being delivered into the hands of men, and killed, He should rise from the dead on the third day †—what more likely than that the agitated glance at the separate pieces of linen—"the linen clothes lying there, and the napkin that was about the head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself"—suggested the ideas, and the ideas the visible images, of *two* angels? ‡

and pulled it in again; and the finger dropped blood from it on the grass." In regard of any such extraordinary event, one may safely conclude that it would be a greater miracle, and therefore a more unlikely explanation of it, to see real miracle in it than to make miracle of it through misseeing.

* *Intellectual System*, ch. viii. p. 849. † Matt. xvi. 21; Mark ix. 31; Luke ix. 22.

‡ It is certain that the disciples themselves were not convinced by the testimony, for the "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them

haps, might be explained one discrepancy in the story, ecessary to account for discrepancies in the story of e written down by believers more than a hundred after the event, or were discrepancies of detail of any moment in regard of a mystery of faith transcending and fying reason. The marvel belongs to the category of al events, to believe which a pious desire to believe is essential, an evil heart of unbelief a quite invincible prevention.

It is obvious, from the foregoing exposition, that want of opportunities and means, want of habit and training, and want of sincerity owing to one or more of the manifold causes of bias, are the three main causes of bad observation—of the overlooking of essential conditions or factors of the problem whereby premature and erroneous conclusions, positive and negative, are based upon insufficient data. Now, a strong positive conclusion from incomplete data is more sure to be put right when wrong than a strong negative conclusion from incomplete data, because it must needs run counter to experience and thus provoke scrutiny; whereas a negative conclusion may require a wide, if not exhaustive, experience of nature in order to settle whether it is well founded or not. If the positive statement be made that a ghost walks regularly in a certain place at midnight, or that an immense sea-serpent, floating full many a rood, disports itself every night in the English Channel between Dover and Calais, it is not difficult to settle whether the statement is true or false; but when it is asserted that a ghost never walks because a ghost exists not, being no more than a phantom of brain-sick imagination, or that the sea-serpent is a mere chimera, it is easy to object that the dogmatic assertion is unwarrantable, because human knowledge of nature is very limited. Always will it be open to the person who has not imbued his mind with the methods and results of such positive knowledge of nature as exists—who has not, in fact, had the opportunities, used the means, and trained himself to the work of observing, and eliminated

not" (Luke xxiv. 7); and that John and Peter, who both entered the sepulchre and found it empty, did not see the angels which Mary, staying there weeping, afterwards saw. (John xx. 11, 12.)

from his mind the bias of its prepossessions—to denounce the blind prejudice of those scientific students of nature who deny the apparitions of sea-serpents and spiritual beings. In order to get entirely rid of that class of objection it will be necessary, not only that the knowledge of nature be exhaustive, but that everybody have an exhaustive knowledge of it. A consummation not to be looked for; in time to come, as in time past, there will not fail to be ample room and occasion for the play of uninstructed imagination.

(*e*) A last cause of the vitiation of observation and thought to be noticed lies in the misuse and abuse of words: a common, deep, and wide-reaching cause of fallacies.

There is an inveterate proclivity to believe that a word must mean an entity, when it may be the sign of an abstraction only, and that the same word must have the same meaning, though it may have very different meanings in different mouths, and in the same mouth on different occasions. Actually the same word never has exactly the same meaning to two persons: an evil which has this useful set-off—that differing beliefs can go on using the same name as if they meant the same thing by it, when they mean very different things. How widely different are the contents of meaning of the word "matter" in the mind of a philosopher of to-day from what the word had in the mind of a philosopher formerly, or has now in the mouth of the vulgar! Although the same word be used, the talk is not of the same thing, but of different things under the same name. In like manner, when the metaphysician and the physiologist dispute about mind, the discussion is barren from its beginning, since they speak not really of the same thing; they have no common ground of understanding, nor even a language in common; the store of experience and reflections which the one has accumulated being useless to the other because based on a theory of mind which he thinks absurd, and expressed in language which has no meaning to him.

How much, or rather how little, is there actually in common between the early Christian, despised member of a mean and persecuted sect in the midst of a hostile community, and the Christian of to-day, the all-triumphant member of a dominant

and aggressive religion which summons artillery to support its invasions and armies to avenge its repulses? It is a contrast, not a comparison of faiths, intellectually and morally, that we are in face of; the two beings, although professing the same religion and called by the same name, being no more like as concrete believers than two persons of entirely different religions and civilizations. The one shrank not from dying a martyr's death for his faith, the other has seldom faith enough to prevent his shrinking from dying a natural death.

Language is the specialized expression or denotation by vocal sounds and written signs—the muscular denomination, so to speak—of feelings, ideas, and their associations. Having been framed in accordance with vulgar experience it necessarily stirs corresponding associations; for which reason it cannot be used scientifically in the vulgar sense when such use gives rise to inadequate or erroneous associations. How are men to obtain new and true apprehension of a class of facts that have been misapprehended, or not apprehended at all, when the language used to describe them, implying and endorsing old and erroneous opinion of them, inevitably evokes misleading associations? How so use the faulty instrument, as if it had no fault, to perform that exact apprehension and expression which, by very reason of its fault, it is not fitted to perform? Until new and truer associations have been formed by the progress of related knowledge it is impossible to have the new facts and relations apprehended rightly and their language exactly defined. There is nothing for it sometimes but to wait through generations until the right associations have been adequately organized and the fit language framed to express them. That is the eternal pathos of it: the mortal burdened by fate with something immortal to say, yet no one to whom he can say it, because there is no one to understand his speech.*

When the painful pioneer of thought puts forth a new theory which meets with no acceptance in his day, but which

* Worse off than the old parrot of Maypures, which could not be understood because it spoke the language of an extinct tribe of Indians whose last refuge was the rocks of the cataracts of the Orinoco. (HUMBOLDT, *Views of Nature*, vol. i. p. 172.) The parrot had once been understood, whereas he will never know that he is understood.

is afterwards revived and accepted, he is credited only with a lucky guess, if he is not abused by those who, mounted on his shoulders, can now see further than he could; or he is ignored entirely. Only after a raising of the general level of knowledge and a fit development of language are full apprehension and exact expression of the theory possible. People cannot then credit the discoverer with having known what he meant because it has taken them a hundred years to find out his meaning; cannot see any merit in his then seeing dimly what they now see so clearly.* Not, it is true, without good reason sometimes, since it is too much the way of theory going before knowledge to use words vaguely, to use the same word in different senses, and to construct systems of philosophy out of the indefinite, ambiguous, and equivocal manipulation of them; the real instruction of such speculative systems being for the most part the instruction which they undesignedly yield as rich mines of confusions and fallacies of thought and language.

It is a common dictum, transformed into an axiom by frequent and confident repetition, that no nation, be it never so savage or barbarous, has existed without some notion of a God; and the allegation is thereupon adduced as strong evidence of the existence of a God. Granting the untrue statement to be true, for the sake of argument, is it not a monstrous misuse of words to use the same term to denote notions so widely different as those which a cultivated European and a low savage entertain of God, and to assume

* And the truth, after all, sometimes is that they discover what has been discovered before, perhaps some thousand years ago, and only dress it freshly in the new language of modern thought. It was one of the disciples of Laotze, the great Chinese philosopher contemporary with Confucius, six centuries before the Christian era, who said, "A vivid light shone on the highest antiquity, of which only a few rays have reached us. It appears to us that the ancients were in darkness because we see them only through the thick clouds from which we ourselves have just issued. Man is an infant born at midnight, who, when he sees the sun rise, thinks that yesterday never existed."—ABBÉ HUC'S *Chinese Empire*, vol. ii. p. 184.

In like manner, young enquirers in all places are constantly discovering what has been said before and is as old as the hills, imagining that to be a new discovery which they have discovered for the first time for themselves. A really new reflection is probably as rare and doubtful an event as a new virtue, or a new vice, or a new disease.

tacitly that they are notions of the same thing? Let a clear and exact definition be made of that which the word is thought to signify in each case; then let the definition of the European's God be substituted mentally for the word on each occasion when the God of the savage is spoken of, and the definition of the savage's savage God substituted mentally on each occasion when the civilized person's civilized God is spoken of—it is instantly and plainly manifest that little or nothing is true of the one which is true of the other. So far from identity, there is barely a similarity of objects; the mental substitution is not a substitution of similars, which is the basis of true reasoning, but a substitution of dissimilars, which is necessarily the cause of false reasoning. It is incredible how many vain disputes arising out of the entanglements of words would collapse instantly were the disputants to have clear definitions of their terms and to substitute mentally the definitions for the terms in their reasonings; were they to keep resolutely in mind the sagacious saying of Hobbes, that "words are the counters of wise men and the money of fools."

A second fruitful cause of error in the use of words is the assumption, tacit or express, that the word must mean a thing. There have been few, if any, more pregnant causes of errors in philosophy than the tendency to make words things by projecting named abstractions of the mind into nature as entities, and thereafter treating them as if they were active agents there. Nature is misapprehended, and of the misapprehensions are made principles or entities in it—metaphysical entities to do duty as explanations of events, though not explanations at all, being no more than restatements of the facts in more abstract terms: a principle or spirit of phlogiston to explain the phenomena of combustion; a soporific principle to account for the narcotic virtues of opium; a vital principle to preside over the phenomena of life; a spiritual principle to uphold the high dignity of mental phenomena. To which, indeed, might be added *an* attention to attend, *a* memory to remember, *an* imagination to imagine, *a* reason to reason, *a* will to will, *a* consciousness to be conscious.

At one time, before the discovery of the circulation of the blood had laid the basis of a true physiology, almost as many special animal principles or spirits were invoked as there were special functions of the body—a concoctive spirit to do the first work of digestion, a chylopoetic spirit to carry the work further, and other spirits to perform other functions; so that Harvey had to protest earnestly in his day against the "common subterfuge of ignorance" by which spirits were called into play whenever the knowledge of true causes failed. His example was no less signal a warning than his protest, for he fell into the very errors which he condemned, when, after having proved the circulation of the blood, where he had observed facts to go upon and was thoroughly at home with them, he went on to treat of the mysteries of generation, where he had not, nor could then have, any foundation of exact observation on which to base his theories, since the microscope had not made minute observation possible.*

This tendency of mind, from which innumerable errors and entanglements and hindrances of thought have sprung, is of the same nature as that which showed itself more grossly in the creation of gods and goddesses, demons and other such spiritual monsters, of which Erasmus justly says that they often "had more of the hangman than of God in them." Is metaphysics anything more than supernaturalism writ fine? In the one case man puts his mental imaginations in nature as supernatural deities and demons; in the other case he puts his mental abstractions there as metaphysical entities or principles. To be above or beyond physics is little different from being above or beyond nature; and any philosophy, be it a philosophy of mind or matter, which is hyperphysical, will be hard put to it to explain its essential difference from supernaturalism.

It is one of the merits of Kant to have first clearly demonstrated to psychologists that all notions and beliefs

* One might say, indeed, that there were two Harveys: the one, the great discoverer, whose discovery was the foundation of modern physiology—an example of seasonable induction and proof; the other, an example of premature speculative theories—a beacon to warn—who maintained that the male germ did not unite with the female germ in generation, and believed in spontaneous generation.

respecting the order of nature, though not innate but derived from experience, are conditioned necessarily by the innate *forms* of human thought. These forms experience does not supply; they are innate in the constitution of mind, the indispensable conditions of its experience, not otherwise than as the forms of bodily movements are conditioned by the constitution and dispositions of its muscles. It was very useful work at the time, and the need of it in philosophy greater then than it is easy for a physiologist to conceive now;* but some of his modern disciples go far to treat forms of thought as if they had existence and meaning in themselves, apart from their contents, and as if they were in no sense relative, like thoughts, but had independent being and absolute value. A philosophy busying itself with these forms, apart from their contents and relations, far from being thought a philosophy of empty words and phrases, claims to be the culmination of true philosophy. Is not that much as if a metaphysically minded botanist were to concern himself exclusively with abstract and absolute forms of trees, plants, herbs, flowers, and their parts, scorning every proposal to unite eternal form with changing substance as a material degradation of true botanical philosophy?

Let the subjective form of thought common to the whole human race be the absolute, seeing that we cannot conceive it changed while men are constituted as they are and think as they do; still, if the order of evolution of nature goes on for countless years to come, making as many modifications and new growths of structure in the future as it has done in the countless years of the past, it is conceivable that the forms of time and space and causality may undergo change, and be proved to be as essentially relative as any other human experience, innate or acquired. Meanwhile what part does space, as a necessary *form* of thought, take in thoughts of time or of logical relations? and what part time, as a necessary form of thought, in thoughts of coexistences in space? It is impossible that any height or depth or form of human knowledge can in the end be more than relative; at its

* Or for a physiologist of the past, perhaps, who had ever read the chapter on "The Senses" in Müller's great work on Physiology.

best, knowledge is incomplete ignorance, belief incomplete certainty.

Because men can form a general notion by reflection on particulars, which they then style a general principle, they are prone to make of this so-called principle a real agency with authority higher than experience. In the first instance always probably, and often afterwards, the process of induction is from the particular to the particular. The child practises such reasoning habitually while it is making the beginnings of learning, just as it does with the learning of movements, and as often as not makes wrong inference, because it does not discriminate the unlike, but puts an unlike thing for a like thing—the fundamental error of reasoning—and so concludes wrongly of it. As it grows in experience it gathers like things together into classes (*interlego*, whence *intelligo*), denoted by general terms or names; and, at a still higher stage of observation and reasoning, the like relations and attributes of things are collected (*cogo*, whence *cogito*) into classes and denominated by more abstract terms. Intelligence is thus virtually, as its derivation implies, a correct classification. For as these stores of classified or, so to speak, capitalized experience, denoted by general names, are laid up in the mind, they are available to be drawn on for use in reasoning; then the inference can be made inductively from the particular to the general, that is, from the individual to the kind or class, or deductively from the general to the particular, that is, from the kind or class to the individual.* But that is to say no more really than that the inference is to or from like particulars, or particulars of the same kind—in other words, to or from particulars which, having been attested as like by a multitude of experiences, have been condensed into categories or classes, and then labelled by a suitable sign or name. Such is the real basis of the authority

* Induction and deduction not being distinct and separable processes of reasoning, but the complementary expressions of one complete process, they represent, as it were, the two aspects—the ingoing or sensory, and the outgoing or motory—of the fundamental reflex process. A good induction means the formation of a cerebral reflex adapted to respond to the qualities or relations which several particulars have in common; a good deduction the fit reaction of such reflex on a particular which has such qualities or relations.

of the general statement or principle—of all the authority too which it can be proved to have. To refer the particular experience to reason, which is to pass by inference from the particular to the general, is to refer to the classified experience of the race warranted good by general consent; reason does not add any higher principle of authority to the process, it is merely the conscious exposition of it; and when there is a question of the meaning of the general principle, that must be sought in the concrete, not the meaning of the concrete in the principle. It will be impossible to get more out of than has been put into the principle, however lofty a name be given to it.

The common way of thinking and speaking of a law of nature exemplifies a fallacy of the same kind. The law is pictured as a sort of objective power ruling despotically in its domain of nature and constraining things to obey it, whereas it is no more, rightly viewed, than the general statement of experience that things go in a certain definite course. The executive force is not in the law, but in the nature of the thing in its relations to other things. The law is simply the generalization of observation, no more than the general statement or subjective formula of a certain order of events, and may be right or wrong, complete or incomplete. If the relations of things are definitely fixed, and a man acts wilfully or ignorantly in regard to them as if they were not what they are, he comes to harm as naturally and inevitably as he comes to harm when he runs against a wall instead of climbing over it; but in that case it is not the law which avenges its infraction, it is the lawbreaker who hurts himself by a stupid or reckless ignoring of things and their properties. He has naturally a less hard penal law to reckon with when he runs his head against a wooden fence than when he runs it against a stone wall, because wood is not so hard as stone. The erroneous notion of law as itself a cogent agency in nature has been derived from the notion of rule or law laid down by human enactment and enforced by due executive authority; and from law understood in that sense the transition was natural and easy to a lawgiver in the universe, working after human methods and made in the magnified image of man.

A conclusion of the same kind is the familiar conclusion from intelligence and reason in man to supernatural intelligence and reason. As though limitation were not of the very essence of intelligence and reason, and these functions could be anything more than a relative being's classified experience of a very limited range of natural things and their relations, or were terms of real meaning, other than literal nonsense, when used in relation to an absolute Being in whom all things are comprehended. It would be no more absurd to attribute to Him labour and rest, as indeed primitive theology did. How can any predication concerning the supernatural by the natural possibly be anything but a meaningless proposition? Nay, when we ponder it, what else but prodigious blasphemy is it to speak at all of the reason of God, whose knowledge must plainly be intuitive, not discursive! He cannot be supposed to work to an *end* in lame human fashion by labouring steps and inferences of reason; must, as all-seeing and infinite, see the remote in the present, the end in the beginning, the universal and eternal in the instant.*

No less error of thought has arisen from the invincible propensity to believe that opposite names must mean opposite things in nature than from the propensity to believe that a name must mean a thing and the same name the same thing. The propensity has often been a serious hindrance to the full and free investigation of the things, and to the discovery that they were not actual contraries; and where there has been some contrariety in the things the direct opposition of the names, emphasizing and exaggerating the differences, has precluded observation of the points of similarity. Thus divisions of knowledge distinguished by proper names have over and over again been assumed to denote distinct divisions in nature, discontinuities being made where continuity prevails everywhere. Had men set themselves to seek diligently for the phenomena of death in life and of life in death, observing carefully the gradations between them, it is not probable that they would ever have set life and death over against one another in such a positive antagonism as they have done.

* Cannot rightly be spoken of as "who was, and is, and is to be," seeing that "was" and "is to be" are not eternal; eternal being to eternally *be*.

Life in any case might be in a poor way without death. In like manner, had they looked for such purposive operations of organized matter as, when consciously done, they call mind, and for such operations of mind as, when unconsciously done, they ascribe to organic matter, they might not have made the complete and mischievous separation of mind and body which has been made. Anyone who, keeping in mind nature's law of continuity, went carefully to work in a province of nature where a distinct line of division was made, in order to find out that it was not the separation which it seemed to be, and why it was not, could hardly fail to bring new facts to light, old facts into new light, and perhaps to make important discoveries. For nature leaps not from one extreme to another, it joins them by mediating instances.*

Many more illustrations of the power of names over things, or rather over the thoughts and feelings about things, might be cited here were it necessary, since the history of thought in every department of nature teems with them. At one time, in medicine, any fancied sign of likeness in a drug or in its name to something in a disease or in a disease's name was thought to be nature's seal of its efficacy in that disease, and in country districts nettle-tea (*Urtica*, nettle) is still the popular remedy for nettle-rash (*Urticaria*).† The so-called principle that like cures like—*similia similibus curantur*—on

* Having made categories or classes, the habit of mind is to insist that every new fact or theory or enquiry shall belong to one or other of them, and to have nothing to say to it if it does not. If it is not *this* or *that* it is rejected with contempt, though the very virtue and value of it may be that it is not *this* or *that*. The out-of-the-rut enquirer must be a somebody-*ist* or a somebodyelse-*ist*; if not, he is nobody—let him be *anathema*. Meanwhile the universe is *one*, not an aggregate of separate *isms*.

† The *doctrine of signatures* was founded on the absurd hypothesis "that every natural substance which possesses any medicinal virtue indicates by an obvious and well-marked external character the disease for which it is a remedy, or the object for which it should be employed." *Mandrake*, from its supposed resemblance to the human form, was esteemed as a remedy for sterility; *turmeric*, as a remedy for jaundice, because of its brilliant yellow colour; *euphrasia* (eye-bright), as an application for diseases of the eye, because it has a black spot in its corolla resembling the pupil; and the *bloodstone*, because of the occasional small specs of a blood-red colour on its green surface, is even at this day used in some parts of Scotland and England to stop a bleeding from the nose.—PARIS's *Pharmacologia*, p. 33.

which the homœopathic system of medicine professes to be based, was not the induction of full and careful experience; not a conclusion reached through adequate observation of instances, but a specious theory engendered in the mind of its discoverer by the captivating suggestion of words. Its faithful application in all cases might issue in practice like that of him who, obeying the scriptural injunction to pour oil into an enemy's wounds, poured oil of vitriol into them.

Among all nations, in all places and times, ill-meaning words have been dreaded as likely to bring misfortune. To the ancient Romans the ill omen boded by the names was good reason for changing the name of *Maleventum* into *Beneventum*, of *Epidamnum* into *Dyrrachium;* a contagion of evil was feared in them. It is a general, if not natural, impulse to shrink from speaking of a person's death in his presence, or in the presence of his friends, or even in any one else's presence; rather than use the actual word people go about to indicate, by some kind of ambiage, what may not be said expressly; and in different nations all sorts of euphemisms are in use for this purpose, just as if the word "death," the moment it left the speaker's lips, was a fateful power to fulfil itself.* Few are the persons who can divest themselves of the superstitious feeling that there is something more than an explosion of vain words, some power more than natural, some mysterious executive fatality, in a parent's curse of a disobedient child, though the child hear it not, or in the victim's dying appeal to God against his murderer. Believing that the universe must be in sympathy with human affairs, they discover in the passionate invocation of vengeance the prophetic pledge of its fulfilment.

So much, then, in exemplification of the errors of belief that have flowed from the natural defects of human observation and reasoning. It is abundantly evident that most of the superstitious beliefs and practices which have come and gone through the human past have had their source and sustenance in these

* Although a general, it is not a universal, impulse; for the Chinese meet death with the greatest coolness; and nothing is more gratifying to the dying man than to see that a handsome coffin has been prepared for him. See Abbé Huc's *Chinese Empire*.

defects. Inevitable once as the gropings of infantile thought, such superstitions and errors, having outlived the reason of their being, persist now as survivals of a lower level of intelligence. Being degradations of thought, in the sense of belonging to lower grades of thought, they are therefore displayed chiefly in civilized countries by those who are so engrossed in the supply of their daily wants that they have not the leisure or inclination to train and cultivate their minds in correct habits of thought, and in relation to those subject-matters of thought that lie furthest from the reach of human apprehension.* When there is a class of men who, wilfully ignorant, deliberately keep aloof from the positive methods of a scientific study of nature by which past errors have been uprooted and the intellectual gains of modern times made, pursuing an artificial training after prescientific methods in subjects that lie outside the aims and means of true knowledge, they inevitably mould for themselves a special mental mechanism which falls into errors and superstitions akin to those bred of the species of ignorance of which they are the representative survivals. He who goes systematically to work to make himself a human reversion, by moulding his mind to the fashion of the meagre culture or fanatical folly of a bygone age, is not enlightened because he does a foolish thing in an enlightened age.

Any one who wishes may follow the entire process of defective seeing and thinking by watching the growth and development of a child's mind, which chronicles, in epitome, the main errors of the development of human thought through

* "Superstition" means literally "something which stands over"; a custom, or practice, or belief, which survives when the life and meaning have gone out of it, and when it is, perhaps, mischievous—as from the inherent conservatism of human nature often happens—is literally a superstition. It has outlived the reason of its being and is what Mr. Tylor aptly calls "a survival." No doubt insufficient beliefs were sufficient enough for their purposes at the time; therefore, although errors now, they were practically truths then. The superstition is to treat them as truths now when, conflicting with experience or contradicted by it, they subsist only by virtue of the conservative force of tradition, custom, and the like, and require, therefore, supernatural authority in order to maintain any credit. Hence another and ill meaning of the word has come to be that which, standing over as beyond explanation by natural causes, is referred to supernatural causes, and cherished as sacred when it is useless, burdensome, even pernicious.

the ages; not otherwise than as its embryonic development repeats in a series of rapid sketches the successive stages of organic development on earth from the simple and general to the most complex and special form of animal life. In the quick condensed acquisitions of its education day by day we have the abstract of the slow diffused acquisitions of mankind through the ages; in its modes of failure and error the brief abstract of ages of human modes of failure and error.*

* The various instructive studies of the psychology of infants and young children that have been made in late years seem to be vitiated in some measure by the practice of reading into the young mind what the older mind thinks to discover there—of interpreting what is forming and scarcely conscious in the terms of full conscious thought, and so of much misinterpreting it. A method of physiological observation might furnish a safer groundwork to begin with than the method of psychological intuition, and a careful study of the formation and association of movements be most useful as an introduction to the study of the formation of ideas; for mental apprehensions are based on motor apprehensions—on the grasp of the object by touch, of its image by sight, of its sound by hearing.

NOTE TO PAGE 68.

No ghost stories are more striking, more widespread, and apparently better attested, than those of the visible apparitions of persons at the moment of death to friends or others who may be hundreds of miles distant. The writers of an article on "Visible Apparitions" in the *Nineteenth Century* of July, 1884, Secretaries of the Society for the Prosecution of Psychical Research, related a case of the kind communicated to them by Sir Edmund Hornby, late Chief Judge of the Supreme Consular Court of China and Japan, who describes himself as a lawyer by education, family, and tradition, wanting in imagination, and no believer in miracles.

It was his habit to allow reporters to come to his house in the evening to get his written judgments for the next day's paper. On this occasion he had written out his judgment and left it with the butler for the reporter, who was expected to call for it. Having gone to bed and to sleep, he was awakened soon by a tap at the door, which, when he took no notice, was repeated. In reply to his call, "Come in," the reporter solemnly entered and asked for the judgment. Thereupon ensued a dialogue between Sir E. Hornby—who referred him again and again to the butler, protesting against the unwarrantable intrusion—and the reporter, who persisted in his earnest requests for the judgment. Impressed at last by his solemn earnestness, and fearful of awakening his wife (who had slept soundly during all the energetic and animated dialogue), Sir Edmund gave him the gist of the judgment, which he appeared to take down in shorthand, after which he apologized for his intrusion and withdrew. It was then just half-past one. When Lady Hornby awoke, as she did immediately, the whole incident was related to her.

Next day when Sir Edmund entered the Court the usher announced to

him the sudden death of the reporter, some time between one and half-past one. The cause of death, as ascertained by a formal inquest, was heart disease. The poor man had not left his house the night before.

Here, then, is a precise and circumstantial story related by a person of eminence and ability and accustomed to weigh evidence, and confirmed (for the writers say so) by his wife. Naturally it attracted much attention, and much jubilant attention from those who were specially interested in ghosts and apparitions. The *Spectator* saw in the story, I believe, incontestable proof of the reality of the spiritual world, and failed to notice its fate. Amongst others it chanced to attract the attention of Mr. Balfour, the editor of the *North China Herald*, who was well acquainted with Sir Edmund and the reporter alluded to. In a letter to the *Nineteenth Century* (November, 1884), this gentleman asks the editor to compare the story with the following remarks:—

"1. Sir Edmund says Lady Hornby was with him at the time and subsequently awoke. I reply that no such person was in existence. Sir Edmund's second wife had died two years previously, and he did not marry again till three months *after* the event he relates.

"2. Sir Edmund mentions an inquest on the body. I reply, on the authority of the coroner, that no inquest was ever held.

"3. Sir Edmund's story turns upon the judgment of a certain case, which was to be delivered next day, the 20th January, 1875. There is no record of any such judgment in the *Supreme Court and Consular Gazette*, of which I am now editor.

"4. Sir Edmund says that the editor died at one in the morning. This is wholly inaccurate; he died between eight and nine a.m., after a good night's rest."

The editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, having submitted Mr. Balfour's letter to Sir E. Hornby, subjoins that gentleman's rejoinder, in which, after accusing Mr. Balfour of want of good feeling and taste in not having written to him privately, instead of amusing the public at his expense, he practically, though ungraciously, admits the whole case against him. But what chance that the story was ever exposed! First, the chance that it was seen by Mr. Balfour; secondly, the chance that he was a person to be at the pains to investigate and expose it.

It is probable that similar stories of the kind would collapse in a similar manner were some independent and competent person willing to take the trouble to test them by a searching inquiry, and, having made it, to take the trouble of contradicting and exposing them. Not that it is in the least likely such exposure would affect one jot the belief of those who are possessed with what Coleridge calls "the angry and damnatory predetermination to believe such effects of the preternatural—*i.e.* of a ghost or devil."

CHAPTER III.

IMAGINATION: ITS NATURE AND FUNCTION

A RICH source of wrong beliefs is the prolific activity of imagination ever prompt and pleased to exercise itself. Hastening off-hand to meet the instinctive desire to believe, by filling up voids of knowledge with fictions and theories, its quick and easy working is in striking contrast with the slow and toilsome work of observation and reasoning. Being the productive force in mind, it has, like the productive force in nature, three marked qualities: it is prolific, it is pleasant, it is prophetic.

Its fertility is in effect inexhaustible, although most of the innumerable products thereof perish timelessly, one here and there only in the prodigality of production being destined to live and grow to maturity. Just as the individual plant or animal in the course of its life generates a countless multitude of germs as many, indeed, as would, were they all to reach maturity, suffice to make a numerous species, perhaps to populate a continent; so the individual imagination is perpetually conceiving germs of thought which, were they soundly based and duly placed, might equal in number all the true thoughts that a nation has had from the cradle to the grave of its being.

How fantastic and futile is the prolific play of imagination unbridled by the rules and restraints of sound reason we see exemplified in the lover, in the dreamer, in the madman. In the lover the source of its special inspiration is not far to seek; but it is not so easy to trace the impulses of its varied and vagrant activities in dreams and in madness. Moods and silent memories of which the individual is barely conscious,

perhaps not conscious at all when he is himself, then come forward into open and unrestrained action. As the fascinated lover endues his beloved with graces and virtues which nobody but himself can see, and is blind to faults and guiles which everybody but himself can see, so the uprising mood or silent memory gives the colour and something of the shapes they take to the fantastic creations of dreams and madness. Why the particular mood or the particular memory? The answer to that question is to be sought, doubtless, perhaps found some day, in the yet scientifically unresolved activities of the several organic viscera as mental factors.

Why is there so much more pleasure in the easy exercise of imagination making fiction than in the labouring work of reason welding truths? It is an instance of the pleasure and spontaneity belonging to the function of generation everywhere in nature. Generation or creation, in poetry, in painting, in sculpture, in invention, in any other art—ποιήσις, that is to say, of any sort—is its function; it shares, therefore, in the transport or ecstasy which accompanies procreation throughout nature: a transport of it alike whether it work well to generate good progeny, or work ill to generate sickly deformities of imagination and rickety deformities of bodies—the depravities of a vicious imagination or the degenerate offspring of a vitiated parentage. The patient and elaborate operations of reason in the adjustment of mind to medium, on the other hand, may be likened to the slow and toilsome processes of education and training which are endured rather than enjoyed, being irksome at any rate in their formation, however pleasant of function when formed. We may be sure then that imagination will always be pleased to produce, and in default of the true will produce the false.

Being forward-reaching, future-regarding, in its function, it is prophetic. As evolution in nature is just a becoming of things, the coming into new being of old matter—a transformation or transpeciation, so to speak—the process of it prompted by the developmental stress or *nisus* of nature; so the essential factor of imagination is that prophetic *nisus* working in the plastic and forming cerebral processes by which the material of old experience and thought is changed

into new forms—into true forms and harmonies when it works well on a sound basis, into figments and fancies of deformities and discords when it works ill on an unsound basis of experience. For good evolution in imagination, as everywhere else, presupposes antecedent involution; it is impossible to *un*fold where something has not previously been *in*folded, to develop what has not been enveloped.

As it is indispensable for imagination to be well and truly informed in order to create truly, to have the good nurture of a sound experience of things and the controlling rules of a right understanding, no one can have a sound imagination without a sound reason, or train his imagination to form rightly except through his reason. Of itself it cannot correct its own work—*that* reason must do; for, like a fond mother doting on her deformed offspring, it is just as pleased with its bad as its good births. The praises of imagination not truly informed are simply the praises of unreason, the follies of it translated follies of thought. Forasmuch, however, as such well-endowed and well-trained imaginations must always be exceptions, passing rarities in nature, the minds of the great majority of men being the illogical structures they are—positively irrational in the literal sense of being wanting in proportion or ratio—we may be sure that imaginations will commonly be defective and deformed. But they will not be any the less active on that account; on the contrary, they will be all the more incontinently active because uncurbed by reason, and all the more extolled by minds lacking reason. Incontinent minds are pleased, and please like minds, with the naked exposure of their incontinences.

The wild abuse of imagination ought not to hinder its sober and proper use. For a long time to come it is certain that men will be unsatisfied to stay in a quiet repose and confession of ignorance as to what lies beyond the reach of thought; urged by an insatiable curiosity to know, they will chafe against the bar to new leaps of knowledge and strive to surmount it. And justly, seeing that without speculative curiosity there would be no enquiry, without enquiry no theories or hypotheses, without theories or hypotheses no increase of knowledge. Definite guesses at truth are what

great discoverers like Kepler and Faraday avowedly make in order to look definitely for it, throwing many aside as worthless for every one which stands the test of verification and, being proved, they hold fast; for it is not the duty of the scientific enquirer to abstain from framing hypotheses, as some ignorantly maintain, his duty is to make as many likely guesses as he can, rejecting the bad ones, until he has made the right guess and proved it right by the full tests of experiment and reflection. His process is nothing else but the application of the common process of vulgar enquiry to special fields of study.

Errors or false lights of imagination are not wholly bad; they are proofs of mental fertility and have their uses. There is no fertility in a Chinese apathy of mind; and in the minds of low savages incapable of development or degenerating towards extinction the notable features are utter absence of curiosity or interest, no spark of imagination, a dull routine of mechanical gratification of animal wants day by day, and a stupid indifference to what lies outside them. So long as the *nisus* of evolution works in mind we may expect in time to come, as in time past, the developmental plastic energy to show itself in the construction of fables to take the place of facts, of conjectures to stand for certitudes, of theories to forestall observation—in fact, in the habitual outrunning or violation of the rules of right seeing and thinking by wrong imaginations. Its unruly products will contain and express the common errors of observation and reasoning previously set forth—namely, sequences made into consequences, coincidences into causations, abstractions into entities, and the like common fallacies. Nevertheless, its leaps in the dark are not always random and barren; they invade new territory and try new paths, and although many wrong paths are tried and abandoned, yet from time to time a right path is hit upon which leads to the enclosure and cultivation of a new field of knowledge.

As with other so-called mental faculties, so with imagination: there is really no such faculty or entity, no abstract constant something—the imagination—which goes to work here and there, as required, to do this or that. He makes but a

poor business of it at the best who tries purposely to create by its forced labour: to meddle with its spontaneity is to frustrate its work. As there are truly as many imaginations as there are acts of imagination, so there are all kinds and qualities of imagination in the concrete—special and general, simple and complex, weak and strong, lame and perfect, virtuous and vicious; differing in different persons, in different domains of exercise, and in the same person in different moods and seasons of life. A man may have a good musical and no inventive imagination, a good poetical and no mathematical imagination, a good selfish and no altruistic imagination; might torture himself to madness with pessimistic imaginations of sorrow, and be incapable of optimistic imaginations of joy; might paralyze his powers of action by imaginations of difficulties and failure, or raise them to a pitch of almost more than mortal grandeur by imaginations of triumphant success. Exalted, whether constitutionally or by temporary causes, it gives a penetration of insight, a confidence of judgment, a clearness of decision, and a prompt energy to which no deliberate exercise of reason proceeding methodically could lift the individual; who just, too, in proportion acts then impressively on others. Dejected, whether constitutionally or by temporary causes, it is held back by anxiously foreseen impediments, cannot effectively figure to itself the triumph and the means thereof, and damps or quenches the faith of others. A veritable calamity, then, in one whose duty it is to act—this weak-willed over-musing which in the end bemuses itself; for the mischief done by over-nice consideration scrupling to act when decisive action is needed exceeds often that of the most rash action.

In the same person according to the seasons of life and to varying bodily states it mounts at one time on wings of easy flight, at another time boggles, stumbles, and stands still; is now ardent and ideal, now cool and practical. Behold the imaginations of three life seasons—in the spring of adolescence when the mortal embarks jubilant on the enterprise of life; in the summer of manhood when he is in the full tide and force of his work in the world; in the winter of old age when, weak and world-weary, his last tired work is sadly done.

With what a glorious alchemy does the adolescent imagination gild the prospect and the labour! Then the physiological attraction of love, kindling it with a glow that never shone on sea or land, beguiles its dupe into marriage as into a paradise on earth, and when he is disenchanted by experience, still finds him sober pleasure enough in domestic joys to do the procreant and prosaic work of the world. Who would spend laborious days of manhood in the patient pursuit of minute scientific research but for the imaginative joys of reputation among his contemporaries, who will only praise him in his lifetime if, not rising much above the level of their dulness, he deserves no praise; or of fame with posterity, who will praise him when praise is no concern to one who is not? Yet there is no toil or pains he will not endure gladly in order to live while alive in the mouths, and when dead in the memories, of men. What aspiring politician would crawl through the irksome and ignoble work of his climbing career were not his sense of degradation in the process dazzled by alluring images of renown to himself, and of good to his country, through the gratification of his personal ambition? That he is disillusioned at last, if he is not a vain fool to the last, matters not, for meanwhile he has done work which he would not have done had he seen things from the first in the dry light of reason. By the glamour with which imagination gilds bare realities it inflames desire and stimulates endeavour; when desire fails in old age and endeavour is a burden, there is an end also of it and of its magic work.

In estimating the value of the products of imagination it is most necessary to take account of the conditions under which it works and of the limitations mposed on its workings. The principal considerations to be weighed in mind are these—(*a*) The common causes of error of observation and reasoning; (*b*) the native structure and special moods of the individual mind; (*c*) the natural limits of human understanding.

(*a*) Inasmuch as imagination does not create out of the void, but forms as it has been informed, its contents witness unavoidably to the modes of thought and feeling of the age, of the people, and of the person. As in times of old, fashioning after

the fashion of the time, it filled nature with demons and deities, more or less monstrously human in character; as in later times it created metaphysical entities out of mental abstractions in order to have species of agents to do what, being ignorant of the real natural agencies, men could not imagine to be done without them; so now, demons being dead and metaphysical entities in desperate case everywhere save in journals and class-rooms of mental philosophy, it luxuriates in theories that forerun and too often forestall sound observation and inference in the various fields of scientific enquiry. If the devil of to-day is a very different person in the Christian imagination from the devil of the middle ages, having undergone a marvellous evolutional metamorphosis, it is not because he has really changed in hell with the changes on earth—it is because the mental image of him has undergone change in proportion as men have come to know more and to imagine less about the real forces and regular order of external nature.

In like manner a gradual modification of the conception of God has taken place so quietly yet so completely as to be a virtual transformation of one thing into another under the same name. The Jehovah of the Jews was a special God—jealous, angry, revengeful, repenting Him that He had made man, execrating the rashness which had sworn that He would not destroy him, greedy of adoration and sacrifice; a Being to be flattered by appeals to His vanity as Lord of lords and King of all gods, among the heathen none like unto Him, and to be moved by provoking His jealousy of other gods; who walked and talked and argued with men, commanding them to do the most atrocious acts of murder, cruelty, fraud, and rapine, and rewarding those who obediently did them because they had done according to His heart that which was right in His sight; in fact, a thoroughly immoral God from the standpoint of modern reason and humanity, albeit a Godhead suited at the time to the semi-barbarous mind and character of His chosen people, and most helpful to their national unity and growth. The Jews imagined as they thought and felt; the result being their hideous conception of the "Lord *our* God," to be propitiated with such slavish

adulation and abject adoration as it was customary to tender to an Eastern monarch, and was required, therefore, of an Eastern people by its national god.

This crude conception was gradually refined and sublimed through later Jewish history, being so transformed by the Psalmist and the Prophets that the transition was easy to the Christian conception of God—the God no longer now of a section of mankind, but of the whole human race; not a tyrant, but a Father in Heaven, All-mighty and All-merciful, who, grieving for disobedient children fallen from grace into disgrace, yet yearning to redeem them from damnation, deemed the incarnation in human form, and the vicarious sacrifice of his only-begotten Son by a lingering death on the cross, the costly means necessary for their restoration to his favour. So transcendent was the offence, not because of its intrinsic magnitude, since it was the mere eating of a forbidden fruit by two sinners who knew not good from evil, but because it was against His Divine Majesty, that it entailed the eternal damnation of every innocent child for a sin committed thousands of years before it was born, and needed a transcendent expiation by the stupendous miracle of the incarnation, the solemn tragedy of the crucifixion, the long tale of woe which is the tale of human life from its beginning on earth, and the everlasting tortures of all but a small remnant of the race. Nothing less than this endless epic of woe could suffice to effect the desired ransom; for to cancel by an easy stroke of omnipotence the breach of a commandment foreordained to be broken, would have been to frustrate the magnitude of the atonement alone suited to the magnitude of the offence. As the Jew conceived his God after the fashion of his thought and feeling, so the Christian conceived his God as he thought and felt; and the conceptions are necessarily widely different. Those who, not being Jews nor Christians, perceive evidence of human manufacture in both images, may still discern in the Christian imagination two rational ideas carried to irrational extremes—first, an apotheosis of the natural principle of atonement which rules in the social body, whereby one member inevitably suffers for another's sins, the just for the unjust, and reaps the fruits of another's virtues,

the unjust of the just;* secondly, an exaggeration of human self-esteem to a sort of megalomania, whereby man counted himself of such transcendent worth in the universe as to have needed and imagined so unique a redemption.

As the evolution of the conception of God has gone on from age to age, not continuing in one stay, it is no surprise that the once-authorized version is not accepted by all Christians at the present day. No doubt most of them still hold it mechanically, as they hold most of their beliefs, without ever being at the pains to think definitely what it is that they think, or think they think. Many, again, sensitively shrink or deliberately refrain from sincerely facing and framing a conception of God and His dealings with men, willing to leave the matter in a vague and abstract haze, and to accept the authorized story as something which, not literally true, perhaps, still somehow expresses essential truth in allegorical fashion. Not a few, whose numbers increase steadily, now abandon altogether the notion of a personal God of any kind, retreating into a vague Theism, which differs little, if at all, except in name, from Pantheism or Atheism.† An abstract first cause or principle of things working through every grade of being now, and making somehow for righteousness in the end, that is a sublimation of belief which, while pacifying feeling, shocks reason less than the crude belief in any form of divine personality. What identity in kind, nay, what in common, is there between such a vapid abstraction and the stern God of the old Scotch Calvinist or the *Bon Dieu* of a modern French Catholic?

(*b*) Again, it is obvious that the natural temper and present mood of the mind affect powerfully the character of the

* The principle of social atonement so clearly expounded in the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah.

† The so-called "Liberal Protestants" of Germany, for example, seem to have pretty well abandoned Theism for Pantheism. Pfleiderer speaks in this fashion: "Once the revolting idea of the Personality of the Absolute has been abandoned"; and Lipsius, of Jena, calls the idea of a personal God "a contradiction in thought and an impossibility, philosophically inadmissible, but useful and, indeed, indispensable, man's nature being such that it cannot but personify what it wishes." I quote at second hand from an article in the *Dublin Review* of October, 1884, p. 277.

imagination. A perturbing passion like envy, jealousy, horror, anger notably lames, perhaps paralyzes, the understanding, and so imbues the imagination specially that it attends slavishly at its sessions and shapes to its liking. Thus it is that the several tempers and moods, the varieties of passion, interest, fear, and prejudice, fail not to work their distorting effects on its products. The pity is that while the quiet glow of tempered passion is a helpful impulse to its creative activity, an excess of passion drives things blindly astray. That which is a virtue in the mean is a vice in the extreme.

Great as are the joys of imagination, its sorrows are no less great; it expiates its capacities of pleasure by equal capacities of pain. When the passion which infuses it is pleasant, marking a gratification and expansion of self, imagination is prompt to construct an ideal world of sunshine answering to the passion's note; when the infusing passion is painful, marking a check to and hindrance of self, it is equally prompt to construct an ideal world of gloom answering to the note of hindered or hurt self. Observe, on the one hand, how quick the fascination of love is to invest the beloved with all the charms and virtues which desire would have; and, on the other hand, how painfully, when a corroding jealousy infects the mind, imagination writhes in the tortures which itself invents. It is always ingenious and able to make its own heaven and hell without seeking them outside itself.

The roots of imagination lie so deep in feeling that its ideals bespeak essential character. Not the distinguishing temper of each mind only, but even organic character; for its inspiring moods may be said to express the concurrence, in conscious outcome, of the multitudinous infraconscious vibrations of the organic nature. Thus sane and whole imagination bespeaks a sane and whole organization; sickly and degenerate imagination, a defective or degenerate organization.

Entirely lacking in sanity are the feeble and flighty products of morbidly neurotic imagination, so many of which, appealing successfully to persons of like mental structure congregated by pathological affinities into cults of devotion and confederate to proclaim and praise them, have been extolled in shrieks of

incontinent emotion and in laboured expatiations of strained and silly criticism. Culture, though it refine, does not sanify the neurotics who, lacking a manly wholeness of nature and addicted to habitual self-abuse of sentiment, press forward nowadays to pose for an exclusive admiration on pedestals of inflamed self-conceit. No doubt there have always been such mental weaklings of talent, but they were not once so much in evidence as they are now; they did not formerly foster and obtrude their sickly sentiments as sublimities; these were seasonably, if brutally, suppressed as hysterical vapours by the salutary contempt of the ambient thought and feeling. Now, however, the means of publication are so many and easy that they can expose the uncomely deformities of their moral persons on the housetops, enjoy the incontinent exposure, and even make their living by it, since they can be sure of the sympathy and applause of some admiring disciples as intense and incontinent as themselves. Man being essentially an imitative creature and imitation a special hysterical trait, a special group of idolaters, who spread the infection from like to like by contagious sympathy, is not long in forming. Their work is nowise the supreme art which they claim it to be when they christen it art for art's sake; not art at all, in fact, but overstrained artifice for the most part, however ingenious in its way; always repugnant to the healthy instincts of a sound mental organization, many times neither wholesome nor clean. Though they are not ashamed of their nakedness, it would be a decent exercise of charity on their part to reflect that other persons may have the right to be disgusted at the special ugliness of their naked deformities.*

Persons of like neurotic temperaments show like frenzies of imagination in fanatical schemes of reform, social, philanthropic, or political. So exclusively are they engrossed with the merits of the aim they have in eager view that they see

* Not so morbid, but no more laudable, are the writers who perform as mental mountebanks and try to attract attention by their contortions—by turning everything topsy-turvy, dislocating sentences, leaving out conjunctions, by incongruous misuse of terms, by hiding platitudes in a cloud of obscure metaphor and verbiage; so that their simple admirers who labour hard to guess the meaning of the riddle are transported with delight at the profundity of the thought and their own intelligence when they discover the platitude.

nothing right in anything opposed to it, nothing wrong in anything which serves to further it. They are fascinated, hypnotized by it; so "overlooked," so to speak, or enthralled by the "evil eye" of the fixed idea, that they are mentally blind to qualifying reasons and opposing evidence. The fanatical anti-vaccinator, or anti-vivisector, or anti-opium eater, or anti-vicemonger, or any other captive of a fixed idea which he feels to be right because it is burning, and holy because it inflames his egoism in altruistic guise, heeds not the evidence which is presented on the other side; the stronger its weight of reason the more he resents it, the more iniquity he sees in those who present and press it, the more sure he is of his own moral superiority. The surplusage of assurance from insufficient evidence he puts down to moral superiority, and in the consciousness of that superiority he divines a kind of divine right to be right.

A further effect of the exclusive and excessive neurotic strain which he fosters is a disintegration of the moral nature; like a hysterical or a hypnotized person similarly disorganized mentally, and similarly unaware of his disorganization, he cannot then see and feel and speak the truth, and knows not when he is seeing, feeling, and speaking untruth. Disintegration signifies inevitable demoralization of the mental organization. So it comes to pass that, rabidly earnest on the subject of his special passion, he is still capable of no little habitual guile, vice, perhaps even crime, without being the conscious or feeling himself the actual hypocrite which he looks to outsiders. Being an extraordinary person inspired to do extraordinary work, he is exempt from the common rules of morality; having christened his vice zeal he indulges it as a virtue. Those who are in league of fanatical sympathy with him may not be expected to confess, even can they see, the fault in him as they would be prompt to see it in an outsider. To them the vice, however ugly it looks, is in him only an unsphered virtue gone pitifully astray.

It is pretty to watch how a body of men united into any sort of league or association for a common end perforce develops the special conscience of a corporate egoism which, being the outcome of the self-conservative instinct of a union

glad, like every living thing, to grow and maintain its being, may be opposed to the plainest rules of common morality. That a corporation has no conscience but a collective conscience is not therefore strange; the strange thing would be if it had. The feeling in common, the *consentience* of co-working to an end, unfolds into a *conscious* knowing and feeling together—a corporate *conscience* which is conditioned by the nature and interests of the special social body, union, or corporation.* To talk of conscience as if it were a unity of constant quantity and quality is to talk in the air; there is a religious, a political, a sectarian, a corporate, an individual conscience —in fact, there are as many actual consciences as there are individuals and sects of men.

When a mental organization is disintegrated or, so to speak, dismembered, whether artificially by experiment, or by bad training, or by disease, and perforce therefore demoralized, it functions not as a whole, but in disjointed parts which are not responsible for one another; wherefore unity and consistency of moral feeling are impossible, and the individual can do immoral things without being rationally conscious of and fully responsible for them. All the more dispossessed of self is he when he is inflamed by enthusiasm, which is a sort of ignition or flaming agitation of mind whereby the particular tract of passionate thought is thrown entirely out of gear. The special imagination of the fanatic denoting this exclusive set of his whole energies to its bent and a deadening or suspending of all impressions which are not or which it cannot turn in unison with it, the natural effect is to attribute more certainty to its vivid representations than to the sober impressions of experience: an effect all the more powerful because of the

* Is there not a Spanish proverb which says, "The canons are good, the chapter is bad"? In a chapter or corporation—which always naturally tries to preserve its power and privileges—selfish instincts have free play, because the individual is sheltered from responsibility, and prevail because they are in the majority. Moreover, he does not clearly perceive his own selfish tendencies, because they seem to be for the good of the body. Honest men must yield usually; they get no sufficient support, because of the timidity and selfishness of their colleagues, and because they themselves shrink before the fear of disloyalty. So the spirit of a corporate body continues in spite of frequent change of its members; and if reform is to come it will not come from within, it must come from without.

delirious delight which usually attends such a rapture of disjointed thought. For it is not merely the exalted thought which is in excess, the accompanying feeling is similarly rapt in ecstasy. Deeming itself then spiritual, though it is essentially irrational, the ravished or ecstatic tract cannot choose but feel its intense experience to be more real and credible than things visible; going on perhaps in process of further morbid development to see visions, to hear voices from heaven, and to enter into direct communion with the supernatural. Thus it is that enthusiasm becomes the accredited evidence and utterance of religious truths.

The world is wise to make the best use it can of such fiery zeal and energy, since it may properly use every tool for what it is worth; but it is not wise to discover a divine afflatus in the inspiration of the frenzy. Where is the wit of adoring fervour because it is fervour, when it is the fervour of disease? To do that, what is it but to go tamely back to the superstition once prevalent everywhere, and still extant somewhere, that there was special divine working in the convulsions of epilepsy and in the delirium of madness. However laudable the inspiration of the fanatic's frenzy, one ought not to overlook the hysteria and the delirum there is in it; and that, so far from being holy in the fundamental sense of healthy, is really unholy because unhealthy. A few more steps lower in degeneration, a few more steps higher in the conceit of an exalted mission, a little increase in the grandiose ideas, a little keener the exasperation of suspicions of hostility—and this kind of neuropathic fanatic, mounting in self-esteem, sinks into a well-defined category of madness.

Because imagination is the fine creative function it is when it works at its best, the fashion is to invest it with a prerogative of privileged superiority, as though it could hardly go wrong, and there was something fine and divine in it when it went wrong. Of the many silly novels and poems published year after year, how few would ever be written but for the pleasures of imagination and the repugnance to rank its follies on the same level with the follies of the understanding! They are the exercises of mind at play for play's sake, and may be likened to the exercises of the body in games of play. But

games ought to have some method and unity in them if they are to be useful exercises of mind or body and to amuse; a game that is made game of is no benefit to those who play it and an offence to those who watch it. Always ready to run riot in waste of over-production, and to go wrong, therefore, rather than to go right, imagination habitually oversteps the just limitations of true creation when it is not held firmly in by implicit rules of right reason. Then its irrational fictions have nothing divine in them; they are no better than the gambols of a puppy or a mountebank. Its right limits being fixed in a rational structure of the understanding, not otherwise than as the body has its fixed constitutional limits to the possible number and forms of the purposive movements which it can perform, it is not capable of unlimited inventions, is bound to repeat itself, and cannot, so long as it is rational, invent anything more strange than experience may some day match somewhere. Truth must always be stranger than fiction when fiction is not mere fantastic folly, for nature is vastly more fertile and varied in its productions than the human mind.

What is the deep source of the credit and privilege which imagination enjoys as a mental function? Whence does it derive the sort of sacred strain of quality attaching to it? Representing the productive energy of nature working in the human mind, whereby man is beguiled to go on doing the productive work of it, its glorification is a kind of mute and implicit worship of the generative force of nature; essentially a refined sublimation of the gross primitive worship which was symbolized in crude phallic form. Love and imagination assuredly reveal and denote man's deepest sympathy and essential unity with nature. For as love, being the imperious passion from which we derive our being and transmit it, has in it a stretching backwards into the infinite past and a stretching forwards into the infinite future, so likewise imagination, most of all in its religious exercises, stretching backwards and forwards into the infinite, has a sort of sacred or divine creative character, notwithstanding the gross and often ridiculous forms and symbols in which it clothes itself. The ideals which man adores, are they not rooted in the

productive energy of nature? And is not that the reason why appeals to ideals in the heart and imagination, not to mere reasons of self-interest, are most effective to move men, at all events in masses?

(*c*) As the natural limits of human understanding set fast bounds to the sane exercise of imagination, to go beyond which is to go astray into inane fantasies, it is obvious that when from the experience of what they observe, feel, and know, men proceed to divine the forms of that which, owing to the limitations of senses and thought, they cannot observe, feel, and know, they are a great deal more likely to be wrong than right in what they imagine. What lies within observation, however fully and exactly known, is not the measure of what lies beyond observation; nor is it certain that only that which has been in time past, at all events in the known past, is that which shall be in time to come. Who, from a knowledge of physics and chemistry, had he chanced to see things when there was no life on earth but his own, could ever have divined life? And what is to hinder a transformation of energy in time to come as different from vital energy as vital differs from physical or chemical energy? How could it ever have dawned on the myriads of mortals who came and went through the years of a measureless past, that the Redeemer of mankind, God incarnate in human form, would appear on earth less than two thousand years ago to make the indispensable atonement for the human race? For the pre-Christian myriads of mortals through immemorial years, how was it possible to believe on Him of whom they had never heard? Had the momentous event been predicted to them they might well have looked on it as the wildest fiction of insane imagination.

In all ages to all mortals before Jesus Christ—to Pericles and Socrates, to Plato and Aristotle, and to the wisest men of nations that are not now so much as memories—an attitude of extreme scepticism would plainly have been the only right mental attitude with regard to all knowledge of man's position and destiny in the universe. For what was the knowledge worth which foresaw not, even in dimmest anticipation, the stupendous event foreordained, and the necessary revolution

of all human thought and feeling in consequence? What is to hinder a like cataclysm in time to come? Is it absolutely certain that the last word has yet been spoken, and that at some remote period of the world's travail a like transcendent event may not happen, to confound human understanding and to revolutionize human destiny?

In the end all knowledge of nature, rapidly as it grows, is minutely limited when compared with an unlimited ignorance of it. Many discoveries not yet dreamt of will no doubt be made in the future, and modify much the moulds of experience; but if knowledge goes on growing for as many years as the world is likely to last, it will not then reach, not even come near, the fulness and variety of the universe. Man will be no nearer the Whence and Why, though he may be more comfortable in the Here and Now. Of this we may be sure, that as the nature we do not know may be unlike the nature which we do know, so also may the nature that now is, and therefore the knowledge of it, be unlike the nature and the knowledge of it which are to be after millions of years of further becoming of things. All the more so if the process of becoming in the future, as in the past, is a process of change from the like to the unlike and from the simple to the complex; for if so-called homogeneous matter, disowning itself, as we are told it did in the beginning, takes new fits of instability and goes off into one knows not how many new heterogeneities and transpeciations, what may the end not be?

CHAPTER IV.

IMAGINATION: ITS ILLUSIONS.

WHILE justly admitting how exceeding finite is the known in comparison with the infinite unknown, and what an endless domain imagination has to play in, it is quite another thing to accept any one of the different interpretations of the unknown which imagination has from time to time devised. Such interpretations have notoriously reflected the moods and modes of thought of the people who devised them. In the respective features of two leading forms of superstition which have prevailed among mankind, there is a striking illustration of two opposite attitudes of mind in relation to the supernatural, inspired by opposite tempers and inspiring opposite interpretations. On the one hand, as outcome of the dejected mood, a gloomy imagination created all-powerful gods or demons of malignant disposition, before whom the trembling mortal fell prostrate in abject fear and abasement, striving to move their pity, to appease their anger, to propitiate their favour by the most tedious ceremonial, the most painful observances, the most costly sacrifices: just the attitude of an abject slave abasing himself to the utmost before an Eastern despot and adoring him in language of fulsome flattery, or that of a fawning dog before an angry master, whom it strives to propitiate by its cringing humility. A survival of that attitude lingers still in the appointed day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer. On the other hand, as outcome of the exalted mood of mind, an inflamed imagination transported the mortal into a state in which he believed himself in communion with the supernatural being, perhaps descended from it by miraculous generation, and invested with a divine commission to lead, guide, and govern mankind.

Himself persuaded and persuading the multitude that he is the chosen organ of divine function, he then poses as a mediator between men and the hidden unknown God—the *Deus absconditus*—who can tell them what the God wants of them, and how he may be best propitiated with sacrifice and service.

Having this two-fold function as a mediator between two different and absolutely separate orders of being, divine and human, it was necessary to have a two-fold nature, divine and human, and, in further logical sequence, sometimes a parentage half divine and half human. For how could he mediate between them if he did not share the two separate natures? So sprang up the fable of the amorous god descending from Olympus in mysterious guise to impregnate the virgin who then conceived and brought forth the hero. In this way various religions of the world have had their several mediators and prophets, inferior to the god yet superior to the man, and have owed to the supernatural sanction much of their authority and binding force. It went badly then with the unbeliever who ventured to doubt or question the established creed; he was counted an enemy to the sacred principle of the special social union whose social conscience he outraged, a pernicious rebel to be exterminated ruthlessly; not a miscreant only in its original sense of misbeliever, but miscreant in the worst sense as a noxious pest, anti-social vermin, an enemy of human kind. And so in some sort he was; for he was a disintegrant there who, had he been granted full freedom and power to work as he would, might have worked perniciously to dissolve the existing social union.*

He who, aghast at the multitude of evils which religion has inflicted on mankind by its slaveries to hideous superstitions, feels moved to exclaim with the poet *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*, and to rejoice in the belief that the truth shall make men free, may still wisely reflect that such freedom might be the swift destruction of a social and political system

* A good deal might be said in excuse, if not in justification, of the enforced death of Socrates. His method of philosophical enquiry was well calculated to sap the beliefs of the Athenian youth, and to dissolve the social or moral restraints which held their passions in check—as in fact there is reason to believe it did.

which had slowly grown up, by dissolving bonds of social union once natural, nay, indispensable, and perhaps still necessary to hold it together. It is most true that there are many fashions of religion as there are many fashions of dress, not all equally good, yet every one good for its time and season.

Ceremonies, forms, idols, and the like, however grossly absurd, are not mere empty absurdities so long as opinion supports them; they are vestures of belief, the visible forms of invisible worshipping spirit. The multitude, unable to worship abstractions, cannot worship in spirit and in truth only; they need and must have some sensible form or image, idol of wood or stone, or man-idol, as concrete symbol of the truth which they would feel and adore; wherefore every religion has had its special saints, ceremonies, idols, and the like. When opinion changes in the changing course of things, so that the meaning melts out of the forms, then ceremonies become empty shows, meaningless tokens, superstitions strictly, and may be safely discarded. But it is quite another thing to abolish the idols of a people while those are the figures or symbols of a vital social belief or principle.

It is curious to see how mankind has contrived to save itself from itself, and, so to speak, in spite of itself; for it has neutralized a humiliating order of superstition, which might have paralyzed its progress, by an exalting order of superstition which animated and impelled it. By the special organs which it was able to develop from time to time in the shapes of special quasi-inspired prophets, it reacted successfully against the prostration of abject superstitious fear and a demoralizing paralysis of its powers. Having damned itself by a dejected exercise of imagination when powerless in face of the unknown forces and terrors of nature, it redeemed itself by an exalted exercise of it when observation and reflection had imparted some sense of power and dignity.

How far the particular prophet or leader who pretended to supernatural qualities took himself and his claims seriously it is not easy to say. Did he ever dupe himself as deeply as he duped his followers? If he was the most fit by capacity and character, he had the best right to teach and rule—

anyhow, the might which was the right; it was easy for him, therefore, to translate his vivid consciousness of superiority of mental kind into a conviction of superiority of mortal kind, and his right to rule into a divine right. Being chosen to reveal or do something which had not been before in human experience, he was nature's agent to accomplish a new development of itself in human things: what more natural than to think himself more than human, something divine—the Nature- or God-inspired prophet? And divine in truth his mission was if by divine was meant its unfathomable source in the primal power of whose external working he was himself but transient effect and instrument. Still, neither more nor less divine than any other event, great or small, in the process of this vast unintelligible universe, all things wherein are alike so many diverse manifestations of some power which, so far as man can judge, was before him, is within and without him, and will be after him, from everlasting to everlasting. Being that, how can any definite human proposition concerning it as it is outside his mind be other than meaningless?

All accounts of savage and barbarous tribes go to show that it was the strong man, whether in war, in hunting, or in council, who was made a chief and thereafter obeyed: loosely and partially perhaps amongst the lowest savages, but with almost absolute submission by those who had reached a higher level of social organization.* When the chief united in himself the ruling and the priestly functions, his position as mediator between his people and the supernatural power, and as sole interpreter of its decrees, could not fail to impart a singular sanction to his authority. In the natural progress of organic development from the general to the special, these

* That is the appointed way of organic matter in its entrance on its path of social development. In the struggle of a social body for life and growth the principle of self-conservation enforces subordination. Most monkeys live in bands under the leadership of an old male, who obtains this dignity by his strength and ability. He is then an absolute despot, compelling unconditional obedience, requiring unfailing attention, and receiving unbounded submission. A savage African potentate has a similar position of tyrannical authority. Organic matter goes by natural law along the same course in the complexities of its social combinations.

functions after a while became specialized and had their separate ministers; among savage peoples a special order of medicine-men, and among higher peoples a special order of priests, became the exclusive agents of the supernatural. So long as ruler and priest were of one mind and worked together, all went well with the people whom they ruled; but when they fell out and fought, as in the end they always did, then great calamities ensued; for it was necessary either for the priest, who represented the conservatism of dogmas and customs, to master the ruler, or for the ruler, who represented the new throes and claims of development, to master the priest. To raze out of human history all the discords, quarrels, persecutions, murders, and wars which have sprung from the antagonism between the natural and the supernatural would be to take out of it a great deal of its substance and to leave a rather vapid remainder. At bottom, the strife, under whatever changing names it is waged, is the eternal struggle between things as they are and things as they are to be, which must go on until mankind, still progressing, has reached the height from which, staying there but a little moment, it will then go down its decline. For after the turn is once made, the meridian passed, the triumph must needs be reversed, the increasing bad gaining steadily on the lessening good.

Those who have watched closely the doings of the medicine-men among savages are pretty well agreed that they are impostors, who, having inherited the mysteries of their craft and being to the manner born and trained, practise it for their profit. Looking on it as their professional means of livelihood in the community, they think it part of the natural order of things and quite as legitimate as any other means of livelihood: cannot see it in its true nature as the practical lie which it is. Their conscience does not condemn even so much of the fraud as it is conscious of. How can they who have not risen to the height of moral sense have sense of the morality of truth? They give the people value for their money, and give it in the only coin which has value for them: what use would it be to give them coin which, not being current, would be useless to them? If nine-tenths of the human nature they have to do with is folly and ignorance, it would show a want

of wisdom to deal with it strictly as if it were wisdom. The impracticable idealist who thought to do that might justly reckon with his own impotence and possible martyrdom.

In civilized countries every guild, trade, profession, trades-union of any kind, strives instinctively to maintain and increase its own prestige and power, however much the individual members may fight with one another, and is not withheld from the pursuit of its profit by overfine scruples of morality; the composite conscience, albeit formed of individual consciences, so differing from and dominating them that the individual is not hurt by doing under its sanction what he might repudiate as immoral in his own private relations. When the verdict of a whole jury is directly contrary to the evidence, and a flagrant affront to reason and conscience, it may be that no single member, had he been set to judge calmly alone, would have been capable of thus grossly perjuring himself and of feeling thereafter no compunction for his perjury. Nations wrangle and fight, dominated by the national spirit, when the individuals composing them desire nothing better than to be at peace. One may hate a nation and yet like the individuals of it, hate humanity and yet like individual men.* In some sort it would seem to be with mental compositions in the social sphere as it is with chemical compositions, where elements unite to form a complex compound the properties of which differ from those of its constituents. Psychology wants and awaits the systematic study of the laws of corporate mental composition whereby, in social growth, composite feelings and opinions, new and overmastering, are formed—the exposition of the laws of combination or federation of social bodies or groups in the process of social evolution.

Imposture will not be fairly judged by the judgment which assumes unity and consistency to be necessary qualities of a mind. Nothing could be more contrary to the truth; for there is not an inconsistency of belief or conduct of which

* "If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do contemn and laugh at, it is that great enemy of reason, virtue, and religion—the multitude, that numerous piece of monstrosity, which, taken asunder, seem men and the reasonable creatures of God, but, confused together, make one great beast and a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra."—Sir T. Browne, *Religio Medici*.

human nature is not capable. The augur who discharges his professional functions, believing in the self which he then is, is quite another self from what he is when, not being on duty, he laughs with his fellow augurs at the comedy in which he plays his part; or perhaps laughs not quite sincerely, since he is so much two inconsistent selves that he takes himself seriously in both. When he puts on the uniform of his holy office he puts on at the same time the uniform of his belief and dignity, and thereupon, like a judge or a policeman, instantly feels and expresses the authority which his office inspires in himself and others. A judge in his shirt-sleeves might be a capable judge and deliver better judgments than an incapable judge dressed in wig and ermine; but he would feel less judicial and do less justice probably, seeing that it is the opinion of things, not the things in themselves, that mankind most regards. Moreover, a habit of belief and action ingrained in germ by tradition becomes by use and wont a second nature; so that, though contrary to all reason, it may keep its irrational place in an otherwise rational mind independently of, indeed, in defiance of, the customary operations of reason and conscience and without being troubled by them. There is a good deal to be said, then, in explanation and excuse of the imposture of the medicine-man when he performs his office of messenger and mediator between the natural and the supernatural.

Among the ancient Egyptians the inner secrets of knowledge and faith were purposely shrouded in mystery and carefully hidden from the vulgar. One may suspect that Moses, being bred up in all their traditional learning, profited by this knowledge in the skilful use which he made of his alleged interviews with the Deity in order to impose his authority on the Israelites. Two things it is difficult to believe now: first, that Moses ever had the conversations or the partial personal interview with Jehovah which he is reported to have had; secondly, that he was ever so possessed and dominated by hallucinations as actually to believe that he had them. Those, therefore, who reject not the history as mythical, may believe that, after the manner of the Egyptian priesthood, in whose secrets he had been initiated, he beguiled the people for their good, inflaming their hopes and zeal with the belief

of supernatural aid and guidance, and sparing them the knowledge of the formidable difficulties they would have to encounter. Is the physician fraudulent who forbears to tell his patient the dangers of his disease lest despair quench vital energy, but instead cheers him with the ill-founded assurance of recovery in order that hope may hearten and animate his tissues? Or the parent who does not let his child know all the toilsome drudgery of life and learning, but flatters its imagination with the praises and pride of success? However great his insincerity of speech in his capacity of actor, Moses evinced a thorough sincerity and veracity of insight into the thing as it was in his dealing with men as their leader; not only in seeing definitely what he had to do and the definite means of doing it, but in the frank acknowledgment to himself that the rational use of the fit means involved the treatment of the ignorant and foolish multitude according to its folly. Had he not condescended to the level of their understanding, most certainly he never could have incited and inveigled the Israelites to go through with the mighty enterprise which he had conceived for their welfare, and been the successful leader he was until, age having sapped his decision and energy, he was supplanted and suppressed by Joshua. After all is said, be it in praise or blame, the successful man of action on men is compelled to put on something of the charlatan in order to impress the vulgar imagination, always so ready to be impressed that it is often satisfied with the charlatanry without the genius. Excellent as are the common precepts of morality for human nature's daily uses, still it fails not to make its greatest heroes of the men who, in mightily managing it, have unscrupulously trampled on its moral rules.

Take another of the triad of great prophets treated of by that "villain and secretary of hell" (as Sir Thomas Browne rudely calls him) in his remarkable essay *De Tribus Impostoribus*—to wit, Mahomet. Is it credible that Mahomet ever had or believed he had the wonderful supernatural experiences which he professed to have? Despite a postulated necessity of sincerity and veracity in the man who did the great work he did, one may take leave to think that the

veracity he had was the veracity to see and use the necessary means by which his countrymen, being what they were then and there, could be best moved and used. If the story be true that when, by way of performing a miracle, he commanded the mountain to come to him, and, the mountain making no motion, quietly remarked that if the mountain would not come to Mahomet then Mahomet must go to the mountain, what stronger proof could there be of his sanity of judgment, of his strength of character, and—it is no breach of charity to add—of his silent contempt for the credulity of his followers? Could he have shown more clearly that he was not himself imposed on by the stories which beguiled them for his purpose and their good? Sincerity and veracity by all means, only let it be the sincerity to see that the majority represents a preponderance of folly which must be managed after its kind, and the veracity to deal with fools as the facts which they are. Rational imagination appeals in vain to irrational imagination; but fanaticism applied to folly quickly makes a blaze.

Men are so prompt to believe that they act from principles of reason and honesty that they cannot perceive how irrational and dishonest for the most part they are. There is no absurdity of thought too preposterous for them to entertain, no monstrosity of belief too gross for them to adore, no irrationality of conduct too foolish for them to practise; those among them who can see and pity the follies of others being earnest to cherish, nay, keen to propagate, the follies of their own passionate faiths which they cannot see. To no generation of men is it pleasing to own that they are ever fooled to go forward on any track of progress; albeit no generation of them has ever gone forward on any path without being fooled. Having followed a particular line of development, every step of it perhaps in blind unreason, they count it progress—which they may do all the more safely as their measure of themselves is not controlled by any higher being on earth than themselves — and thereupon set their reason to work to demonstrate that the way of it is the way of right reason, and that they have attained to more and more truth and righteousness in proportion as they have gone more and

more forward on it. How could they do otherwise, seeing that the reason which they then set forth explicitly was implicit previously in the so-called progress? They might have had the same belief of progress, and made a like express demonstration of reason, had they chanced to go in quite another direction of development. Meanwhile, were a being of another and higher order of intelligence—remote, separate, superhuman — calmly to survey human history from its beginning until now, what else could he see in it but one continued spectacle of folly and madness?

There is one consideration more to be taken account of in judging the sincerity of the semi-divine prophets who have stirred mankind to mighty issues—namely, that what they actually were and did in their day was something very different from that which after-generations recounted of them. The event was often one thing, the story of it called history quite another thing. Once the mortal who has done great things in the world is magnified into something more than mortal, the inflamed imaginations of his followers invest him with attributes and credit him with pretensions which he never claimed for himself, and deeds which he never did. He would be confounded in amazement could he revive for a day to know what is then said of him. A swarm of myths clusters around him, and there is no fiction of the imagination too absurd to be believed of him by the zealous partisan who writes down the history of his life a hundred years after his death. Thus it comes to pass that imagination peoples the past with mythical beings and their fabled doings, as it peoples the future with ideal beings and ideal lives to be lived somewhere: it makes histories that are fictions and conceives fictions that shall be histories. Fallen from a past state of innocence and bliss, it is evermore on its way to "times in hope" when it shall enjoy again a state of innocence and bliss. Is there a thinking mortal who has not sometime had the bitter thought that he has come into the world either too late or too soon?

Because of the prolific activity of imagination and of its impotence to criticize and correct its own creations, the natural tendency in human nature to lie is strong: between its wildest

flights and its true creations there is scope enough for every degree of belief from belief which is certitude to belief which is only half-belief, and down to no belief at all. The tendency to false representation must be strictly and persistently repressed during childhood by the lessons of education and social training, the social conscience working steadily to rule the individual conscience; and it is kept in check, if not suppressed, in the adult by the habitual pressure of the surrounding social medium, with the stability of which its free indulgence would be incompatible. But the historian, the biographer, and the daily reporter are under no such silent and ever-acting checks; in them, therefore, the natural instinct asserts itself; and the result is that there are few things more imaginative and less worthy of credit than history and biography, except it be contemporary story. Could anything be more fanciful for the most part than the historian's theories of human progress based on large ignorance of the real motives, causes, and characters of events, and on his private mood-inspired imaginings of what was and what was not—at all events, on very incomplete knowledge of what was and a correspondingly biassed imagination? Certainly no one who has ever read a history of events of which he had an intimate knowledge can help a suspicion that the best history is no better than a tissue of ingenious fictions. Or anything more absurd than the biographer's misrepresentation of a character—partly witting, in order to embellish it by leaving out what may not and putting in what may beautify it; partly unwitting, from ignorant misunderstanding of it and of his business? Although the history of the man's life is his character, his biography often leaves it a miracle or a marvel how his life, being what it was, could have proceeded from his character as represented: the result, no possible real being, just a preposterous incongruity or monstrosity.*

As the writer of true history would need a mind equal to, if not larger than, the minds of those who figured in its events, even when he really knew them, and the true

* The unanimous howl of indignation raised when the biographer does not suppress the unwelcome truth, but allows the accepted hero to exhibit himself as he actually was, proves the instinctive determination to uphold the ideal at the cost of the real.

biographer a mind equal to, if not larger than, the person's whose biography he writes, the great poet's fictions are vastly truer history and biography than the elaborate and many times ridiculous expatiations of the scholar in his closet—those wonderfully lucid expositions of the thoughts and doings of men by one who, having never perhaps mixed with men, knows not how they think and act practically. Though there is probably not a word of truth in Homer's exact story of the events of the siege of Troy, yet there is assuredly more essential truth in his inventions than in most real histories. As for the inventive reporter of current events, if he was in the past what he is in the present, it is plain that history must lack the basis of any accurate record. He has, it is true, undergone evolution, like other things, in the course of human progress; but the gossip of the street-corner is not made more true by virtue of being spread abroad widely and quickly by telegraph instead of from street to street by word of mouth.

As the domain of the supernatural has now been reduced to a small field for the exercise of imagination, its post-scientific is much more sober than its pre-scientific work was wont to be. It seems hardly credible that it should ever have invented what it did and that men should ever have believed what it invented. Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? Where the gods of Greece and of Rome? Of India and of Mexico? The devil who, in the early days of Christianity, roamed about like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour—where roams he now? The grotesque devil of the middle ages and the more human-like Satan of Milton's conception have both faded into fables of imagination. Not one of these dead supernatural beings could live in the mental atmosphere of the present day; being the work of imagination weaving the coarse vestures of crude thinking, they are the spectres now of departed faiths. To modern Christian thought and feeling the devil and hell in any imaginable shapes are becoming an encumbrance which it would be a relief to get rid of by relegation to the decent oblivion of an obsolete allegory; they were suited formerly to an immature, they are unsuited now to a maturer, understanding Still, a wise caution may not be too swift to let

the devil wholly die; for quiet reflection might instil the suspicion that a principle of good in the world without a principle of evil could have no more meaning than a convex without a concave, or an east without a west—that it might be impossible, therefore, to abolish the devil without abolishing the Deity at the same time. What are these conflicting forces of good and evil but the universal flux and reflux of mortal things, the eternal strophes and antistrophes of the long-drawn human tragedy?

The modern wonder is that the ridiculous stories of the gods of Olympus and of their loves and hates could ever have been taken seriously by a people of so high an intellectual development as the Greeks. This is a wonder to people who never wonder at the more incredible wonders they themselves at this hour believe. It would be a mistake, however, to think that the stories were taken seriously by all those among whom they prevailed and who professed to believe them; they were national superstitions which, having their present social uses, it was proper to believe in the interests of the state, or necessary to feign to believe for fear of being put to death, like Socrates, for Atheism. If a man will not swim with the foul stream of his day, he is not unlikely to be drowned in it. Cicero, as orator and statesman, praised the popular religion, professing himself a true believer and recounting the miracles it had done on behalf of him and the republic; but when he wrote as a philosopher he treated it with disdain. Of the varieties of religion it might be said, as Gibbon said of the various forms of worship in the Roman world, that they "might be considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful." In all nations, even in savage nations probably, there has been a small minority, were it a minority of only one, who saw through the imposture which dominated the vulgar understanding, and rejected privily what it was not safe to condemn publicly.*

* What was the "Secret of Descartes" which has puzzled commentators? Was it not perhaps the actual materialism of his philosophy covered and hidden with great art under an elaborate metaphysical fabric? When he had declared animals to be machines, he might fear to be suspected of proving men to be machines. Concealment was necessary in his day if he were not to run the

As many gods have been superseded by one god in the course of human evolution, so the conception of the one god has undergone, and still undergoes, change. Monotheism in name means not the worship of the same god in fact, not even when it is professedly the worship of the same god. Different as were the original conceptions of the Jewish and the Christian gods, Jew and Christian profess now to worship one and the same God. But they do nothing of the kind. It is the name only which is the same. As the Jew is still in expectation of the Messiah to come specially to His people, rejecting Jesus Christ as an impious impostor, while the Christian believes the rejected Christ was not only the true Messiah promised to the Jews, but the incarnate Son of God, of one substance with God, it is evident that they cannot, when they go beneath the name to think sincerely what it signifies, believe that they worship the same God. They have their separate keys to separate heavens, and can hardly look frankly into one another's eyes, if they are sincere, without thinking that they are severally damned. All the while they do look into one another's eyes without drawing the inevitable conclusion.

It is no wonder then that the tendency of modern thought in Christendom, impatient of self-stultification in futile endeavours to conceive the inconceivable, is to refine and subtilize the conception of God, making it more and more abstract, until every element of personality has been eliminated from it. "An abstract supernatural omnipotence" which created all things in the beginning and, having started them on their foreordained way, has not interfered since with their ordered course—such is the remote abstraction, suspended in ever-receding dimness, which the Christian theologian postulates as a necessity of philosophic thought. Such too the ingenuity by which men can contrive to accept the entire transformation or dissolution of a belief so long as the label of it is left intact; such the moral legerdemain by which

risk of having to make a public recantation such as Galileo was forced to make, or of being put to death as a heretic like Giordano Bruno and Servetus. A fanciful and perhaps quite ridiculous surmise. But what was the "secret of Descartes"? Certainly he had a complete grasp of the principles of the reflex function of the nervous system, though necessarily without a knowledge of the particular applications which anatomical knowledge has now made possible.

they reconcile themselves to go on reciting its fables as literal truths, and performing their functions as ministers and stewards of its mysteries; and such the way of mental development by which has come into being now a new species of Doctor of Divinity so learned in divinity as to have unlearned the divine in it.*

Meanwhile, strive as such men may to strain the dregs of personality out of their conception of God, they cannot possibly get rid of them entirely. In the end they are no nearer the truth essentially, though further from the concrete, when they conceive an abstract omnipotent power working by methods to ends, than when they conceive a personal Jove or Jahveh. For is it not a pretty absurdity to think of omnipotence exerting power and having aims? The very idea of power is purely human, essentially anthropomorphic; it is derived from the consciousness of a self making exertion and doing things purposively in consequence, and has no meaning except within such human limitations. The conclusion is from self to a greater self, from the less made in the image of the greater to the greater made in its image. And it is impossible for a finite being to conclude otherwise if he concludes at all; he cannot choose but think in terms of self, and therefore conceive supreme power as a magnification of self, whether it be in the definite form of a personality or in the formless vaporization of an indefinite and remote abstraction. Yet so empty does he feel the conception of abstract power to be when he has got it, as in truth it is, that he is compelled to make it more real to him, more to his liking and more like him, by calling it *a* power or *the* power, and then spelling it with a capital letter as a proper name.

Having thus made an Omnipotent Power after the image of power in himself—made it, that is, in his likeness—he is bound to go on immediately to unmake it, because he feels instinctively that he has done it wrong, being so majestic, to give it human quality. He therefore proceeds to cancel, one after another, every human attribute of it, not doubting the

* *Philosophy and Development of Religion.* OTTO PFLEIDERER, D.D. He dismisses with contempt any "interference with the ordered course of nature."

while that, everything in it being thus got rid of, it still exists; and, having done that, he makes his successive statements of what it is not, his negations of thought, into so many positive attributes, translating *not* finite into *The* Infinite, *not* visible into *The* Invisible, *not* conceivable into *The* Inconceivable, *not* limited in might into *The* All-mighty or Omnipotent, not bound to conditions of place and time into the Omnipresent and Eternal, not subject to necessary conditions of knowledge into Omniscience. Thus he pays himself with words in trying to think what is beyond the reach of thought; for omnipotence is not power, nor omniscience knowledge, nor are eternal and infinite really words which have positive meaning to man.

There is little or no real difference in meaning, be the contention about names ever so fierce, between him who, confessing that he cannot know beyond the reach of thought, forbears to name the unnameable, and the believer in an abstract supernatural omnipotence which he names only in terms of negation. Nor is the crude assertion of the Atheist that there is no God necessarily the direct opposite which it seems to be of the assertion of the Theist that there is a God, or—as he might perhaps better say—that God is; for if the two, agreeing that there is something beyond human relations, outside human comprehension, bigger than mortal capacity, unknown and ineffable, as they cannot help doing, were to agree to call the unsearchable mystery God, and every progressive human incarnation of its power a Son of God, without attempting to translate the unknown into terms of the known and to ascribe human quality to that which is not within human thought, they would have little left to fight about. In any case it is certain that the highest and most rarefied abstraction, deistic or pantheistic, to which thought can strain, is no more like the unknown infinity than any other anthropomorphic conception which has had its origin and vogue in human thought. Of the revealed in nature the revealing mind may tell something, but how can it tell anything of the unrevealable? Science, which is knowledge, makes no pretence to meddle with what it demonstrates cannot be known—it would not be science if

it did; it asks only of the theology which explains the origin and mystery of things that it know its own meaning, mean what it says, and verify its credentials.

In another field of thought imagination has wrought with great effect to build and keep up a belief of personal immortality. The belief, strong and sacred as it seems, is not now, nor ever was, universal among mankind. There have always been savages utterly destitute of it; the Jews were without it during a long period of their history; one sect of them, the Sadducees, continued to the last to hold that there was no resurrection. The Buddhist immortality, whatever else it may be, is an annihilation of self; and among Christian peoples who hold the belief most surely, there have always been individuals, and those not the least thoughtful, who have rejected it absolutely as the fond fiction of human egoism. Moreover, were the belief the universal thing which some theologians would like it to be, and like, therefore, in spite of evidence, to believe and assert it to be, the fact would not be absolute warrant of the truth of it.

It is in the Christian religion that the belief has its deepest root and best soil. The recorded resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth to life on the third day after His death (that the Scriptures might be fulfilled), and of His subsequent ascent into heaven, naturally convinced His disciples that, as had been promised to them, they should rise to a new life after death and reign with Him in immortal glory in heaven; to believe it, too, in such gross human fashion as to expect an approaching end of this world and to wrangle among themselves which should be greatest in the coming kingdom of heaven. The crude notion which pleased poor and ignorant persons drawn from the very dregs of the populace could not fail to offend the cultivated intellect of the apostle Paul; in order to surmount the incredible marvel of the resurrection of a material and corruptible body long after it had rotted into its elements, and these had gone to compose new bodies, fated in their turn to be dissolved and incorporated anew in endless series, he, spiritualizing according to his wont the gross common notions, had the ingenious inspiration of its resurrection from the dead as a spiritual and incorruptible body.

The extraordinary position of privilege which the Christian usurped for himself in this world could not fail to strengthen his belief of a world to come and of his exalted position in it. For now, as he believed, after innumerable races of men had come and gone in sequent toil and suffering through innumerable years, not dreaming of the momentous event on which hung the fortunes of the whole human kind, past, present, and to come—to him, thus late and favoured in human story, was the glorious revelation made of the Redeemer sent to accomplish the great atoning sacrifice which was to reconcile God to man. As those who believed the glad tidings were thenceforth a body of elect, destined to live in eternal happiness in heaven, while disbelievers were doomed to eternal torment in hell, no stronger motive to believe nor stronger stay of the belief could well have been imagined. And so from then till now the Christian has been fortified to bear patiently the afflictions of this life, knowing that they were but for a moment and "not worthy to be compared with the exceeding weight of glory reserved for him hereafter." Without the expectation of personal immortality Christianity would lack the very reason of its being, its adherents be, as Paul passionately proclaimed, of all men most miserable.*

As it is the nature of man to believe something, and, in default of the true, to believe the false—since he cannot but believe in order to think and act at all in the world—so it is his nature to believe what he wishes, and, in default of a true, to believe a false wish. Now, as he does not wish to die, he is always ready to believe that he will not die yet, nor ever die wholly. The one thing which he cannot do when in full tide of being is to realize his not being; only as vitality ebbs does the belief in its continued flow weaken and the thought of its ending grow real. In the jocund vigour of youth a person knows that he will die, as he knows that he will grow old and feeble, but he cannot really conceive it, may be said hardly to believe it. For belief

* "The Life and Spirit of all our actions is the Resurrection, and a stable apprehension that our ashes shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours; without this all religion is a fallacy, and those impieties of Lucian, Euripedes, and Julian are no blasphemies, but subtle verities; and Atheists have been the only Philosophers."—*Religio Medici.*

is not a constant something, but a name to denote beliefs; and they differ in kind and in qualities of strength according to the quality of feeling which infuses them. The lusty adult, again, in his prime of manhood, proud of his thoughts, his aspirations, his projects, and of the deeds which he does, rejoices confidently to run his course, and cannot believe that a mind capable of such great things—and how can man judge greatness but by his own measure?—will perish everlastingly when his body dies; wherefore he eagerly translates his immortal longings into intimations of immortality and rejoices in a hope full of immortality.* But the case is quite altered when he grows old and sad and life-weary, or when he is wasted tediously by languishing or prostrated suddenly by violent sickness; for then, life being a pain and burden from which he would gladly be released, he craves not so much for immortality as to be rid of mortality; easily conceives the cessation of being, and the blessed relief of ceasing to be; and would reject immortality absolutely if it were the immortality of his present self. At the solemn moment when he is just about to enter on the life after death he has the poorest imagination of it, the weakest wish for it, the thinnest belief in it; he can then desire, conceive, long for the rest of death; he cannot desire, conceive, and long for the activity of life. The immortal longing being the expression of life in imagination, it is extinguished gradually by the process of dying. No one at the moment of death believes in a life after death.

A truth, though unwelcome, ought not to be rejected because it is repugnant to the feelings of those who love illusion and live gladly in the illusion they love. He who has been a frequent witness of the actual process of dying cannot but wonder at the preposterous fables which excited imaginations have constructed about the death-bed. Fear-stricken imagination is then swift to dominate the observations of sense and the reflections of reason. The sorrowful attendants on the sad scene, being anxious, agitated, and full of fear in

* "But felt through all this fleshy dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness."

HENRY VAUGHAN.

watching the near approach of death, ascribe to the dying person desires and feelings and fears which they, strong in life, have and think he must have; albeit he, being nearly dead, has them not nor can possibly have them. They imagine how they would feel if, feeling as they do now, they were in his situation, forgetting that in such much different conditions they, so different, would not and could not possibly have their present feelings. Any chance-utterance of the dying man's—a simple exclamation or a delirious cry, coherent or incoherent—they eagerly catch and interpret in the terms of their own excited feelings and imaginations, and thus entirely misinterpret; discover in the muttered word peace not the simple wish to be left at peace, but the express assurance of a peace which passeth understanding; in the cry for more light because of the darkness of failing sight a foreglimpse of heavenly light; in the last flicker of expiring memory reviving a long-lost face or voice of childhood a vision or voice from the spiritual world; in the ripple of an uncertain smile across the face, as automatic as the reflex visceral smile of a sleeping baby, the joy-sign of a celestial glory-peep.* Meanwhile the actual state of the dying person is most often one of persistent belief that he will recover, at any rate will not die this time, until he is so ill as actually dying to be incapable of knowing that it is death; or it is one of dull indifference to what is going on around, a semi-somnolent apathy, as if it were some scene enacted at a distance, half shadowy, in which he had only a dream-like remote concern; or it is, occasionally but rarely, a passionate prayer for the

* The extract which follows is from an article in the *Spectator* of March 16th, 1895, on "Variety in Smiles." Of the "heavenly" smile the writer says, "This smile comes to our minds as a refutation of the materialist, a pledge and promise of the fulfilment of our highest hopes, and a visible witness of the unseen and the spiritual. As we catch a glimpse of it lighting up the face in some happy moment it becomes impossible to believe that it is a mere natural product of our humanity, as we now know it. It must come from without, from some higher source, and flashed through this earthly vessel of the body. It is seen only at rare moments in life; it is seen on the lips of the dying; it still seems to rest on the cold features when Death has set his seal on them, with that indescribable look of glad expectancy of serene and joyous surprise which Rossetti has so beautifully indicated in his picture of the dead Beatrice."

relief of death when he suffers the fierce pains of an acute agony or the long weary weakness of a tediously protracted agony. However, one need not expect that the facts will affect vulgar opinion in this matter; it is not the knowledge and disillusion of experience, it is the passion and illusion of life "vaunting in its youthful sap," which strike the predominant note of mankind's thought and feeling; and it is pretty sure that in spite of observation, and in spite of the personal testimony of those who have recovered after having been at the point of death—instances forgotten as soon as wondered at—the world of buoyant life will go on insisting that death is terrible; that man must always dread it, even when he kills himself to embrace it; and that the prospect of a life hereafter alone alleviates its horror. Life-thrilled imagination clutches passionately "the blessed hope of everlasting life," recoils with horror from "the bitter pains of eternal death." Still, despite the rigour of his creed, a compassionate Christian, reflecting on the very small minority of the human race elect for salvation through it and on the sad doom of the multitudes not so elect, might pitifully recoil from the thought of the bitter pains of eternal life and mercifully nurse the blessed hope of everlasting death for all mankind. Happily for him, perhaps, he is mostly illogical enough to disbelieve things as a man which he believes as a Christian.

It would be more true generally to speak of the imagination than of the belief of immortality. For the most part it is but a half-belief, the sort of partial belief which many persons notoriously cannot help feeling for a popular superstition which at heart they believe not. Had Christians the genuine belief which they wish and think to have, they never could live as they do in practical negation of it; live—as for the most part they have always done—as if this brief life were all in all, while professing to look forward to an eternal life of retribution for the deeds done in it. By their deeds, not by their creeds, are they rightly judged. Not the thoughts and feelings which did not, but the thoughts and feelings which did, govern his conduct are the true record of everybody's true belief: it matters not what he thought he believed,

still less what he said he believed; what his life was, that alone reveals truly what he believed indeed.*

Life exhibits what, were it not that they are direct and exclusive opposites, might seem an unreasonable antipathy to death. From this instinctive antipathy is bred the desire which gets easy translation into the hope and belief of immortality. Although suicide, when it is done, is just as natural an event in the cosmic order of things as the fall of a leaf or of a meteor, or as death by natural disease, the Christian world for the most part will have it that a person cannot be in his right mind who, sick of it and its doings, kills himself. And yet, were it a question only of dry reason, abundant reason might be given to prove it a greater madness sometimes to live when it is in a man's power to die. When any one labours under a painful and mortal disease which must be a racking torture until its inevitable end, the efforts of his friends and the aim of medical art are strenuous to keep him alive to the last possible moment—even though in a state of narcotic stupefaction—though he himself perhaps invokes death with every conscious breath he draws. Were an animal suffering in the same hopeless way it would be thought a kindness to kill it, a cruelty deserving punishment to keep it alive; yet the animal has no life to come after death, while the tortured mortal is being kept out of immortal life!

Why such unreason? Manifestly because of the forces which do so much to inspire and sustain the imagination of immortality: the instinctive love of life and horror of death by life which so often and so easily overcome reason; and the lofty conceit of the sanctity of human life, whereby its

* Is not eternal life, after all, something of a contradiction in things, since we know life only as ending in death, and death as the condition of life, and cannot conceive life except in contrast with death? To call life eternal is to attribute to it by means of an adjective a quality which it is of the very essence of its nature that it has not. It is a pretty piece of self-deception: to get rid by abstraction of as many attributes of the finite as possible, to imagine that it has been divested of all limitations, and resolutely to maintain a voluntary ignorance that, when so divested, it has been really divested of its being. What can be more unmeaning than for a finite being to think of anything *sub specie eterni*? That must always be to think the finite and to call it infinite.

flame is counted too sacred a thing, once it has been lighted, ever to be put out voluntarily.*

It would be all the more curious, therefore, were men really the rational creatures they aspire and profess to be, that they should always have made it their main business to kill one another, and should still spend their ingenuity and labour in inventing, perfecting, and using the most deadly instruments for that purpose; notoriously never rising to such transports of enthusiasm nor revelling in such raptures of glory as when engaged triumphantly in the bloody business. What admiration, monumental or historical, comes near that which is bestowed on the great conqueror who has done the most successful slaughters? Saul may have slain his thousands, but it is the greater glory of David to have slain his tens of thousands. The seeming inconsistency is not perhaps so radical as it looks, since it is by what they do, not by what they say, that mankind evince their real belief; and at bottom they evidently have a deep silent instinct, despite their professed ideals, that human life is a brief, passing, and somewhat cheap thing in the cosmic system: in their exultant pæans of jubilation and praise, when they kill one another by thousands, they speak the triumphant voice of nature on its destined way of organic evolution and dissolution.†

Although the imagination of immortality has its deepest source in the instinctive love of life and in the special

* Having called it "sacred," they are content with the word as an explanation, without ever really thinking why or when it is sacred, or what "sacred" actually means. The word is one of those comfortable words which, expressing a present vague feeling, it would be a distress to define. Of course there are good social reasons why no one should be officially entrusted with the power to put an end to human life.

† Some thirty or forty years ago a statue of Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, was placed in Trafalgar Square, London, opposite the College of Physicians, with the usual jubilation of speech and newspaper. After a few years it was quietly taken down and removed to the side of a pond in Kensington Gardens, without public protest, to make room for a soldier of moderate distinction. It was the natural triumph of the genuine worship of the real over the artificially acclaimed ideal. Men are willing to worship the ideal so long as it is the ideal—so long, that is, as it does not go beyond its function to become the real; if it does that they are apt to crown it with thorns and crucify it, and thereafter, having got rid of it practically, again to worship it.

conceit of human life, it has also obtained much illegitimate support from certain misunderstood analogies of nature. The leaves of the trees fade and fall in the autumn, yet in the following spring the trees put on new leaves! Yes, but new leaves, not the dead leaves that faded and fell. If the tree itself die when its leaves fall, it never more bears leaves on it. Behold, again, the marvellous process of insect metamorphosis! As the unshapely crawling grub suffers a dissolving change, its form being gradually dislimned and a new form gradually limned, until in its stead the careering butterfly bursts into beautiful being, so the grub-like life of man on earth may be transformed into a butterfly-like life of beauty and brightness in a heavenly sunshine. The fault of the analogy, and the pity of it, are that the grub does not then die; for when it does actually die it rots, as man rots, and no butterfly ever issues from it: what happens is a change of form of living matter, a work of transformation, not a resurrection of dead matter to life again.

Again, though the green plant dies to the ground in winter and a new plant shoots up in its place in spring, that is because the root is not dead but alive; for if the root die no new plant ever springs up from it. When he declared emphatically that the seed sown in the ground does not quicken except it die, St. Paul spoke wrongly in ignorance or in guile; for if the seed sown was not quick it would not quicken; if it really died the sower might sow bushels of it without ever seeing a single shoot come up.*

These are false analogies when applied to support the opinion of a resurrection of the dead; they take the living for the dead, and reason wrongly from that wrong assumption. What they really go to prove, when the facts are rightly read, is just the contrary: that the dead rise not again to life but, undergoing inevitable corruption, are gradually dissolved into

* Hardly in ignorance, since he was learned; and Job (ch. iv. v. 7–12) had made the just comparison between the tree which, though it was cut down, would sprout again, and the man who dieth and riseth not. A comparison, indeed, nowise uncommon. It constitutes the wail of the well-known Idyl of Moschus, beginning—

Ἄρχετε Σικελικαὶ τῷ πένθεος ἄρχετε Μοῖσαι.

their original elements, which then serve to build up the lives of new beings. Can the dispersed elements of every single human body, after endless pilgrimages and transformations into the parts of minerals, plants, and animals, come together again to reconstitute its individual form? If so, it is impossible to conceive the multitude of claims which there might, nay, inevitably must be, to right of possession in every single element. It is individual life, not life, which dies on earth, for individual death is the condition of new life.

If it be alleged that the death of the body is not death wholly, but the release of an imprisoned spirit from its bodily tenement and its entrance then, in the form of an invisible spiritual body, on a higher life of some kind in a higher sphere somewhere, that is a statement which does not rest on observation of nature. No one has ever seen, touched, or had other sensible evidence of the independent spirit in man, nor has it ever been detected in the act of quitting the body with the last breath. The latest psychophysical investigations of experimental psychology have not hitherto demonstrated any such departure. As the knowledge of the departing soul has not come by outward observation, so neither has it been gained by self-observation; for certainly no one can speak from his own experience of a spirit apart from the body, much less of its departure from his body at the moment of death. It is absurd to cite as evidence in this matter the opinion which primitive people had and some barbarous people still hold—namely, that the spirit leaves the body during dreams and ecstasies and delirium to make journeys on its own account, returning home to it when the dream or ecstasy or delirium is over; for the riper understanding of man perceives what unripe understanding could not perceive, that everybody's external world is in his mind, not his mind in the external world. When thought wings its instant flight from London to Pekin it does not go very far; it travels only from one nerve-track in the brain to another so close to it that a microscope is needed to demonstrate their separateness. Naturally, therefore, it takes no longer time to travel from London to Pekin than from London to

York.* Certainly the teaching of natural observation, objective and introspective, is emphatic to show that in this world mind comes into being with the body, grows with its growth, matures with its maturity, sickens with it in sickness, decays with it in decay, dies with it in death. It was not the light of labouring reason, but the flash of illuminating faith, which infused the assurance of immortality; the conviction, therefore, survives by faith in spite and defiance of reason. They do singular disservice to religion, and exhibit a strangely ignorant rashness, who think to discover or prove human immortality by observation of nature: ignorance of the methods of positive enquiry by which all natural knowledge has been obtained and of the foundations on which it rests; a rash betrayal of spiritual faith in basing it on the weak foundations of human observation and reason. To go about to prove supernatural revelation by reason is nothing else but a proof of want of reason.

But inasmuch as the people who can rise to the fit illumination of faith are few, a small company of elect, it results that the great majority of mankind do not really believe, even when they think or try to believe, that they shall live through all eternity. No doubt they are glad to nurse the sweet persuasion that their immortal longings are intimations of immortality, but to nurse it as a vague and pleasing suffusion of feeling rather than ever to think definitely what they mean by it. If it is right, following the principles of right reasoning, to forecast what human beings will be in time to come from the knowledge of what they have been in times past, candour cannot but confess that, notwithstanding the leaven of the few good men made martyrs for

* Here it must be confessed that the all-embracing Shakspeare is quite at fault when he makes the impatient Juliet say:—

> "Love's heralds should be thoughts,
> Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
> Driving back shadows over louring hills."

They have no such velocity, their rate of travel being but mean and insignificant compared with the speed of light.

There is not a thought but takes time, and more time at some than at other times, according to the person's bodily state. In fact, time and ratio have as essential a part in the constitution and function of thought as in the constitution and function of any other natural product.

their goodness, their record is not such, nor is likely soon, if ever, to be such as to render their perpetuity more desirable than deplorable. How prodigious, if we think of it, the amazing conceit that the whole universe—sun, moon, stars, and all the hosts of heaven, known and unknown—were created in order that one of the most insignificant of the planets might serve as a theatre for man and his doings such as he and they have been and promise still to be, and that every single being who has ever drawn breath since human breathing began will live for ever and ever. What a mighty prodigality of means, for so mean an end!

The truth of course is that men do not believe it, however eagerly they hasten to say and think they do; not one among them could live for a day as he lives if he really believed it. Happy to indulge a vague notion of an abstract kind of indefinite existence in an indefinite somewhere, without daring to realize to themselves what the peopling of eternity means in the concrete, they conciliate the profession of hazy belief with a life of very practical disbelief, and carefully cultivate a voluntary ignorance of their hypocrisy. The history of mankind, like the history of the individual, is the true story of its belief; and that is a history of practical unbelief in a future life, for it is the history of a truceless struggle to get the best of this life.

Nevertheless the ideal of a future life has had its good use as an abiding incentive to the individual to try to do well and to go on doing in this life. As it is the way of desire working through imagination to invest its object with the qualities suited to gratify it, the desire to live and be happy has gilded a life to come with splendid hues of hope and shaped it in bright forms of fancy; and the effect has been to stretch human aspiration and aims beyond the brief term and mean end of individual life, whereby the race has not failed to benefit. The process is but a carrying forward into immortality of the daily process of mortal illusionment. Looking forward every to-day to new morrows which shall be better than yesterdays, the individual goes on hoping and striving: hoping that things will grow better gradually and striving for what he hopes will make them so; and this with

a pathetic persistence despite his own disenchanting experience and the recorded experience of those who have gone before him. Even Solomon's authority breaks and shatters against such strong illusion; a bounding optimism perceiving and accusing a foolish strain of pessimism in the wisdom of the wisest of men. Still the most lusty optimism might pause quietly from time to time to put sobering questions. Who would wish to live his life over again? What particular self of what particular period of his life would he select to be his immortal self? Would he have wished to live his life at all had foreknowledge and choice been granted him? Would he wish to live again any other person's life exactly as that person lived it? Is the great poet ever ambitious to be a great politician? or the great general to be a great philosopher? or the great painter to be a great bishop? or the great athlete to be a great actor? or anybody great to be a great anybody else?

In the end it matters little how such questions are answered, for it is certain that mankind will still go on thinking life to be worth living and its prizes worth striving for. An adverse judgment of life by those who can pause and judge it will not be regarded by him to whom to live is happiness enough, any more than a judgment of life by the old is regarded by the young. It is fresh life, lusty and buoyant, ever renewed as the old perishes, which infuses the joy and desire to live, and strikes the predominant note of human optimism; when the individual, worn-out and disillusioned, is no longer in sympathy with life's stream of tendency and helpful to it, he is necessarily pushed aside, rudely or reverently. Mankind will gladly perhaps raise a statue to him after his death if he has done great things for it in his life, because such visible monument gratifies its vainglory and is an abiding appeal and spur to the vanity of the living to spend themselves in its service. In this vital flow of human things is discernible at bottom the working of the same teeming energy which is manifest also in the reckless waste and prolific renewals of all forms of life on earth, in the profusions and raptures of blossoming and breeding, in the inexhaustible visions of human imagination.

Illusion is the very essence and expression of the *nisus formativus* working in mind, disillusionment a kind of decay or death of it. Men do not go on living from rational motives; they find rational motives for living because they like to live. The ideal of the living molecule necessarily is to live: tacitly implicit in its essence are the reminiscence of past life whence it came and the expectation of future life into which it is to pass. Happy he who, his organic inspiration enduring well to the end, dies not disenchanted. Happy, too, the race if perchance it die before, vitality waned and passion spent, it is disenchanted.*

The memories of mankind are short, and they seldom carry their imaginations much beyond their memories. The tomb of oblivion is the inexhaustible womb of novelties. Ephemerals who remember the rising of the sun of their day of knowledge, they can hardly imagine that successive suns have risen and set on successive races of men through a dateless past, still less that races buried in oblivion may have thought and felt and done essentially as they think and feel and do now. But what right have they to presume that knowledge, any more than life, was born within the brief span of their records? To non-Christian peoples it may well seem a monstrous exaction to make on their faith, if not an unwarrantable outrage on their understanding, to require them to believe on pain of eternal damnation that the real intellectual and moral life of the human race only began within a span of time so short that nineteen persons, each living for a hundred years, would more than cover it? They may naturally conclude that what has been is that which shall be on earth, and that in time to come Christendom and its beliefs, like other phases of human belief, shall be unremembered by the successions of peoples to come in the cycles of human destiny. Yet most Christians virtually believe that the world began at the birth of Jesus Christ.

The wise preacher, having applied his heart to know wisdom, was wiser than to imagine that wisdom was born with him; he

* Putting aside for the moment notions of the supernatural and viewing the awful event naturally, was ever sadder cry uttered than the despairing cry on Calvary—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" From the entirely natural point of view—and assuredly the cry breathes the poignant note of human agony—it might sound like the bitter cry of a sudden disillusion.

saw clearly that that which is hath been already in the ages before, and that which is to be hath already been—that there is no new thing under the sun; that as there is no remembrance of the former generations so neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter generations that are to come, among those that shall come after; that in the sore travail laid on the sons of men wisdom and folly, mirth and laughter, labour and enjoyment are a striving after the wind and alike vanity; that the wise man dies even as the fool, and of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever.* Like the transient vortices in the river's current as it flows perforce to the ocean, peoples have come and gone through a measureless past without leaving any more trace behind them. Even such momentous events in human history as the rising and setting of great moral teachers, who, substantially repeating one another, proclaim the ever-expected, ever-unfulfilled human regenerations, seem to occur in the revolutions of things much as constellations rise and set, or as comets come and go at their appointed seasons. The people who behold the bright particular star gaze, admire, and adore, but it rises to its height, shines brightly for a time, then fades out of sight, and the people who follow after are much as if the day-star had never risen. So little in the long run are events, big or little, which mark the brief successions of human revolutions within the vast order of cosmic involutions, evolutions, and dissolutions.

Instead of busying imagination vainly with the inhabitants and events of a supernatural world which, being above nature, must plainly be beyond its nature, it were better perhaps to inform it rationally with true conceptions of the beings and events of the natural world, and to reform radically the common mental picture of man's place and relations in the universe.

Surely imagination is lamed in its freedom by its traditional and habitual conceptions of magnitude and minuteness, of space and time, of good and evil. Space and time are not, any more than good and evil, objective things; it is but a habit of mind to make realities of them, as it is a habit of mind to personify good and evil; they are mere conditions or forms of

* Ecclesiastes, ch. i. See also Job, ch. viii. 9—"We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."

human perception, and might be conceived very differently by two beings, of whom the one was constituted to see only microscopically, the other to see only telescopically. Abolishing time, or rather the usual time-conceptions, imagination might conceive all the human systems that have been in the past as going on together now through revolutions of rising and setting, as multitudes of solar systems are presumably doing in the immensity; abolishing space or the usual space-conceptions, it might conceive the innumerable solar systems dispersed through it as condensed into one molecule and constituting its structure; and having thus got rid of vulgar limitations of time and space it might conceive all the solar systems and all the human systems, past and present, belonging to them as coexistent in one complex molecule, itself fated in the end to disintegrate and disappear like any complex chemical molecule. What would the ratio of human things be in such a cosmic molecule?

The perception by man of the very small part which his proud personality is of the infinite whole is no excuse for vehement outcries of protest and lamentation. What right has he either on the one hand to bemoan himself because he is so little in the immensity, or on the other hand to claim that it has all been created and maintained for him? If he cannot see that the universe has not been made for him he cannot choose but see that his function in it is to conform his desires to the order of things, since the order of things will not conform to his desires, and to school himself to do his little part, gladly or sadly, but at any rate patiently, in the whole: in order to obtain that which he desires he must ask only such things as the special system of nature of which he is a little part is ordained to grant. "Thy will be done," excellent as a submission, is futile as a prayer, since it will be done, whether it is my will or not, and in whatever I will. What boots it then for any one to make himself a howling discord in the universal concert? Against fixed fate there is no remedy; he must obey, whether he do so with passionate reluctance or decently and with dignity. To discipline the heart to follow the method of the understanding, by submitting itself patiently to the order of nature and thus bringing itself into accord

with it—that is now, perhaps, the right task which lies before mankind to do. It must do, in fact, what the individual has to do, soon or late, in his small sphere. For as the intellect has ceased to spin theories of nature out of its own substance, and made its large profit as servant and interpreter of nature by patiently observing its laws to obey them, thus conquering by obeying, so may the heart have to abandon the immense egoism which craves a universe made in the image of desire, and by conforming itself steadfastly to the order of things reap its great reward in quiet strength and tranquil resignation of feeling—gain its victory also through obedience.

This scientific way of dealing with feeling is not absolutely opposed to the mystical assumption that feeling is infused with a transcendental inspiration, whereby the divine, expelled from the understanding, survives in the heart; for such transcendental ecstasy of feeling as finds the infinite in a lover's kiss might be the genuine expression of union and communion with the life of nature in, by, and of which every being is, yet the various translations of it into terms of human thought still be no more than so many lyrical outcries of human egoism. Certainly there is a repugnance of feeling to admit the conclusion as to the purely subjective and finite nature of intelligence, now on all hands pretty well accepted, to be equally true of itself. That could not well be otherwise. For desire is in close touch with the life of nature, having its deep root in the organic life whose instinct must needs stretch backwards to the life which was before it and forwards to that which shall be after it; whereas the intellect represents the laboured adaptations of the animal life by which the organic life maintains and fulfils its being—its effective means and instruments, so to speak.

The philosopher who has risen to such a height of detachment from desire as to be able sincerely to preach the suppression of the wish to live as the true aim of life, has plainly nothing more logical to do than to go and straightway end himself. It is his ill fortune to have been ill furnished for his life-travail; he has been endowed with a strong critical intellect, a too enquiring and penetrating spirit of analysis,

which urges him to look not only at but through things—even to scan passion while gratifying it; an intellect in fact not so intimately infused and instinctively swayed by the blind passion of organic life as to be the envassalled and uncritical minister of its desires. Implicit in his mental nature is the quintessential abstract of the experiences of reflective forefathers, which, when awakened dimly in him by the events and occasions of life, sound the inevitable *vanitas vanitatum* of mortal things.

CHAPTER V.

IMAGINATION CONTINUED: ITS PHYSICAL BASIS.

WHAT is the nervous substratum of imagination? That is a question which he must perforce ask himself who knows that nervous substratum it must have, and wishes to form clear and distinct ideas of its true basis, of its rational development, and of the conditions of its sound exercise. The pre-essential requisite to a definite answer is to clear the mind of the metaphysical notion that there is any such being or thing as *the* imagination; to realize distinctly that the name is only a general term to include a great number and variety of particular imaginations, and that there is no imagination apart from each particular act of imagination. The right question therefore always is, What is the particular nervous substratum of a particular imagination?

It is a now accepted physiological doctrine that the substratum of a thought is a nervous tract representing, at a higher cerebral remove, a sensory nerve connected by a nerve-centre with a motor nerve; a reflex arc, so to speak, along which the proper nervous current runs in the cerebral plane. How then can imagination have any place or part in a process which, though it may be strong or weak, quick or slow, cannot go off its own track, cannot in fact transcend the experience which has informed it? When imagination works to create something new, something beyond known experience, it is a specious, if not necessary, surmise that there is a formation of new nerve-junctions or nerve-tracks between the old stocks or tracks of thought, by the bringing into use, for the formation of such junctions, of nerve-cells that lie about in all stages of incomplete development; that is to say, if the intervention of a nerve-cell and its processes be necessary,

as assumed, to effect a junction of nerve-tracks. For if one idea means a current of activity along a particular nerve-track and another idea another current along another track in the cerebral cortex, it is clear that when an unexpected relation is suddenly revealed between two ideas hitherto looked on as unrelated, a communication between the two tracks—functional if not structural—must have been made: the novelty of thought demands a novelty of nerve-current. When two currents run along nerve-tracks into adjacent nerve-terminals where, so far as can be seen, the nerve loses its isolating sheath and ends indistinguishably in the tissue, it may be that, accumulating there, they attain by intensification or by nearness of approach such an attraction of affinity that they rush together across the intervening matter and make a new path of function: a new temporary line of communication through contiguity or contact when the imagination is a transient fantasy, a duly organized track when it is a well-grounded organic imagination.*

Two different ideas or different qualities of them joined together so as to constitute a new conception—*that* is the fundamental type of imagination in invention, in art, in poetry, in science. Its lowest exercise is the incongruous joining of things without real relations in their natures, as when the head and neck of a man are joined to the body of a horse, thus making a Centaur: a childlike performance of grotesque art attesting prolific energy of it without the basis of substantial reason. At a higher level comes fancy, yoking things or qualities together temporarily by superficial traits of resemblance, without regard to fundamental quality and essential likeness; which revels therefore in whimsical and fugitive associations, fanciful metaphors, sportive sallies,

* A transient flash of motion certainly in the first instance, which might be an induced current, seeing that oftentimes a thought hardly conceived and not pursued, or if conceived, not recorded at the moment, escapes and is lost for ever. It is not perhaps in mechanical and visible paths of conduction, but in the invisible subtilties of electrical physics, that we must seek the true analogies of cerebral function. Neither contact nor continuity of structure may be needed for one nervous current to excite another; the process may resemble the excitation of an electric current in one wire by that in another wire some distance off.

ingenious artifices, is abundantly playful, but not truly productive. At highest level stands truly informed imagination which, nourished by the best reason and sensible to the deepest affinities of things, organically unites essential qualities of them, thus creating a product which is a living addition to the structure and life of the mental organization: something more perfect than individual experience and in harmony with all possible experiences of its kind, a perfectly mathematical mental synthesis of its kind. If fertile combinations of ideas, flashes of new conceptions, prophetic anticipations of experience, represent new forming associations between appropriate nerve-tracks, the formed structure displayed outwardly by the poet in his poem, by the sculptor in his sculpture, by the painter in his picture, by the inventor in his invention, must be contained and organically represented in the innermost of his brain. The work of art, good or bad, cannot help being the translation of the law and order, or of the want of law and order, in the mental composition and organization of its creator. How, then, can the good fruit of rational imagination ever grow from a bad stock? Its essential condition must needs be a good stock well nourished and well trained.*

Moreover, the creation is organic before it is conscious. The actual work of imagination is unconscious; it is the result only which awakens consciousness. True imagination, being of free and spontaneous function, foresees not, much less devises consciously, what it is going to imagine; in silent exercise it fashions the form which then rises above the threshold of consciousness, sometimes as a surprise and a delight. No strain nor pains of consciousness will ever stimulate it to do what a dose of morphia or a good organic mood will

* An interesting exposition might, I think, be made of the characteristic features by which the epileptic imagination sometimes betrays itself in novels. A good example to select for the purpose of demonstration would be the Carthaginian romance *Salammbô* by Gustave Flaubert; the violent, abrupt, and exaggerated scenes and incidents of the book—so many enormities, if not monstrosities, of unbridled imagination delighting in the extraordinary, the outrageous, the impossible—doubtless being to the real characters and events of the Carthage they aspire to reproduce very much what epileptic convulsions are to the normal movements of a performing athlete.

enable it to do with consummate ease. By virtue of the quality of its organic nature, composed and organized as it is in a well-constituted and well-functioning brain, the new products are developed in their times and places out of the capitalized mental store as necessarily and naturally as the sprouting buds on the sapful branches of a tree in spring, or as complex chemical compounds are built up of simple compounds. No doubt the process of the organic synthesis is a much more complex affair than any chemical process; in it work affinities and repulsions—mechanical, chemical, and electrical—more numerous and subtile than obtain in purely chemical processes, and in addition to them perhaps some special affinities and repulsions connoted by the term *vital*. Of these we know nothing exact yet, nor are likely to know much for a long time to come; but we know that they exist, and have laws as fixed and necessary as the known mechanical and chemical laws. Our whole present concern is to take firm mental hold of the broad fact that the actual work of imagination, however it be done, is done by the brain beneath the threshold of consciousness, being there silently conceived and matured, and that it is the formed product, the new birth of thought, which is consciously illumined. To lay down rules of imagination, then, is little less absurd than it would be to lay down rules of conception and gestation; its rules are the rules of right reason in a rightly endowed brain used to right thinking and feeling.

Having a true conception of the forming process of imagination one may survey the elaborate instincts of such little creatures as ants and bees with less wonder, perhaps with more understanding, than it has been the fashion to do. The puzzle will not seem so great why they do imagination's work without imagination. For that is what they virtually do. Although the ant does, on a small scale, the same kind of work which the bricklayer does on a large scale, there is said to be a vast difference, if not between the like works, at all events between the like workers, because the ant works by instinct and the bricklayer by mind. That is to pay with words without settling what their value is, or whether they have value at all. It were wiser, putting the words aside,

to go directly below them to the study of the things which they are used to denote and thought to explain and to try to get a clear apprehension of what they are.

Consider well what the Pelopœus wasp does. It collects clay in round pellets which it carries off in its mouth to build its nest, working with cheerful hum to place each pellet fitly on the edge of the cell, and to spread it out over the circular rim by means of the lower lip, guided by the mandible, itself astride over the rim the while. After the addition of every fresh pellet it takes a turn round, patting the side of the wall with its feet inside and outside, before flying off to gather another pellet. What essentially does the bricklayer do more? No doubt in the wasp's nervous system the power to do the clever work it does is innate or implanted or instinct—in other words, is in it; *that* is the necessary function of its organism constructed as it is, though it may still be that the creature learns some part of its skill by imitation of its kind. For in no creature, not even in man, do we take adequate account of the part which instruction by imitation plays in making it what it is: the bird's song is not, any more than man's morality, entirely instinctive. However that be, it is certain that in the main the intelligence is implicit in the wasp's structure, and that the individual never could learn its accomplishments in its lifetime; that we have in it a nervous mechanism able to perform an intelligent piece of work which, were it human work, would be thought certainly to denote the preordaining intelligence of mind. The silent intelligence shown by the wasp would be vastly greater in degree no doubt, but would not differ in kind, were it to build a cathedral for its cell.*

* The Melipona bee, like the Pelopœus wasp, gathers pellets of clay, which it uses to build up a wall to close up the crevices of trees or banks in which they construct their combs; one tiny species builds in addition a neat tubular gallery of clay leading to the entrance, placing sentinels at the mouth of it.

There is a blind species of ants which in its forages always avoids the light, moving under leaves and fallen branches, and when its columns have to cross a cleared space constructs a temporary covered way (traced by Mr. Bates for one or two hundred yards) with granules of earth, arched over, under which the procession passes. The granules are nicely fitted together without cement, both sides of the arch being built simultaneously, made to meet admirably, and fitted with a keystone at the top. Yet men cannot leave off wondering who the

The bricklayer's case is different, it may be said, because he learns consciously and does designedly what the wasp does instinctively and automatically. But is it quite certain that the wasp is entirely unconscious when it does so well work which, were it conscious, we should call intelligent and ascribe to reason; making, as the manner is, the ordered proportion in the work—its *ratio* or reason, that is to say—a metaphysical faculty to do it? If it be so, then it is all the more easy to conceive that when the nervous system of man does like intelligent work the consciousness which attends the process is attendant only, adjunct not essential to the working agent. Why should an intelligence which does not need to learn, but is perfect for its purpose, not be as good evidence of mind as an intelligence which has to be formed and perhaps works lamely in the end? If not of mind, what is the instinctive intelligence evidence of? To say that it is the work of instinct is nonsense, since it is the faculty which is instinct, not instinct which is a faculty. If the answer be, not of an insect-mind but of a supreme universal mind instinct in it, then it ought to be shown what else a mind so localized and conditioned in the insect is but the insect's mind, and what more a similarly localized and conditioned human mind is.

In any case it is indisputable that the exact and special reason incorporate in the insect's present nervous structure was not there from all eternity, but was somehow acquired and ingrafted, whether consciously or not, by ancestors in its line of organic development. All that the bricklayer does is to gain for himself in a less precise way and in a comparatively short time what the wasp owes to the precise gains of its kind made in past places through past ages. And that assuredly he could not do if he did not himself inherit, instinct in the present constitution of his nervous system, a large foundation of latent intelligence gained in the same way by labouring ancestors; more perhaps than he

clever mortal was who first found out how to build an arch! The truth, doubtless, is that no mortal ever did find it out, and that the clever mortal was he who was first conscious that it was unconsciously found out.—BATES's *Naturalist on the Amazons*, p. 226.

ever gains for himself consciously. Moreover, when he has by practice acquired the perfect skill to do a complex deed or to form an instant judgment he does it unconsciously and automatically, as the wasp does its building: the work is done by the fitly trained organic mechanism whether consciousness attends it or not, and done all the better the less the consciousness; and it cannot be done, however keen and busy the consciousness, until the fit mechanism has been organized. The function is just the outward expression of the inward law of structural synthesis. In the result, then, the wasp and the bricklayer are in much the same case, though they stand on different planes of organic development; in both the nervous system does purposive work automatically. Manifestly, too, it is not quite lawful to say that the wasp knows not what it does, seeing that we know not what its consciousness may be; nor that the man knows what he does, seeing that when his skill is perfect it is unconscious.

What then is the right conclusion? Not to put a metaphysical something into the one to do what the other does well without such an agent, but to see and own that nerve-structure itself, at certain heights and in certain forms of complex organization, can do of itself, and does as the necessary functional expression of its organized nature, such purposive acts as we mean by intelligent and suppose to need a predesigning consciousness. What we christen intelligence or reason are the implicit laws of its structural organization when they become explicit in function; they are the definite mathematical proportions or ratios of such structuralized synthesis; and its implicit affinities and repulsions of elements, when they are explicit, are sympathies and antipathies, loves and hates. There is really nothing more nor less wonderful in the intelligence of the insect's instinct than of the man's reason, nothing more unwarrantable than to make an impassable chasm between them, nothing more gratuitous than to ascribe them to different supposititious entities. His intelligent admiration of its skill, what is it at bottom but the attesting sympathy of similar organic manufacture, the natural effect of connatural structure? From monad to man the continuity of nature is unbroken.

The theory of natural selection is that the architectural skill now incorporate in the insect's structure was gained by fit organic adaptations to the medium from age to age through a dateless past; the creatures which were successful in fitting themselves to their surroundings surviving and propagating their structural advantages, the unfit perishing and their disadvantages with them. Thus was effected a gradual framing and perfecting of the organic mechanism to its present perfect form in each kind; for perfect of its kind it must be supposed to be, since, being now fixed and not varying any more, it may be deemed, if not the best thing which nature can do, at all events the last thing which nature has in mind to do, in that line. But why that particular line? Why that form rather than a hundred other imaginable forms in so vast and infinitely varied an environment? If the result depended only on so-called accidental variations of structure fostered by surroundings which fitted them, it is still curious that the organic matter should have developed into that exact form. After all, it is possible that as there are definite chemical compounds formed according to definite laws of combination, and the elements do not combine otherwise, whatever the surroundings, so there may be definite organic types, preordained in the so-called accidental variations of individuals, after which only can the syntheses and forms of organic development take place. The ovum of each creature grows not but after its kind, whatsoever its surroundings, and can only grow in fit surroundings; in like manner an organic variation in any creature may contain its implicit laws of form-growth derived from its parent-structure which no external circumstances can change, and only certain external circumstances may fit. Thus might a budding variation, like an imagination, witness to essential character.

So paramount a creature as man may not allow that the humble intelligence which the nervous system of an ant performs can be of the same kind as the high intelligence which his brain performs; his superior dignity is instant to exact that his endowments shall differ not in degree only, but in kind. Nevertheless, if things are looked at simply

and clearly as they are, without preconceived bias, still more striking examples of a community of nature between him and the animal world are manifest, not only in the manifold instinctive intelligences exhibited by different species of animals, but in the remarkable social developments which some of them have achieved. Imagine all these accomplishments, all these various examples of intelligent instinct and social union, now dispersed among different creatures, to be collected into one creature, harmonized there, and displayed by it in unity of function, the result would be a prodigy of varied intelligence which, if not of human height in all respects, albeit higher in some respects, would show something, rudimental or perfect, of every quality which man considers to distinguish him mentally. How many thousands of thousands of years elapsed before he could do in whole what animals have done for innumerable ages in distributed parts? His most vaunted inventions, products of intellect which he can never sufficiently admire and esteem himself for, often follow in the wake of very ancient examples and do not always overtake them. Why, then, cannot variety of nervous organization, collected and concentrated in him, do as a whole by itself what it confessedly does in separate parts distributed through various animal species?

Even moral feeling, which, being the attribute of man's highest nature, he deems most markedly human and esteems good enough to be of divine quality, is found dispersed through different species of animals and presents notable varieties in different individuals of the same species. Take for example his next-of-kin, the monkeys: they show the widest differences of moral character, some being gentle, good-natured, lively, and confiding; others morose, peevish, and fretful; others obstinate, spiteful, and malicious. The howling monkey of the Lower Amazons is sullen, surly, and untameable, and does not survive many weeks in captivity. The Caiarara monkey, which is a most restless creature, though not playful like most American monkeys, is easily made a pet of; yet its disposition betokens a singular nervous irritability and discontent; its expression of countenance is anxious, painful, and changeable, and there is a want of purpose and satisfaction

in its restless movements; it is not happy when it has got what it wants—*e.g.*, its favourite food, a banana, but will leave it to snatch morsels out of a companion's hand. In these moral traits, in which it singularly resembles a variety of human idiocy, it differs widely from its nearest kindred, another common variety of which is much quieter, better-tempered, and full of tricks that are of a playful character.* It is most certain that mere nervous organization exhibits in these varied patterns of temper and disposition very different moral qualities. And not in monkeys only, for different species of animals exhibit as many degrees and varieties of rudimentary moral feeling as might perhaps, if collected into one creature, abate the vaunt of human conceit.

It will be said, no doubt, that good feeling for its kind, however admirable, is not moral in the monkey, nor bad feeling, however vicious, immoral, because the monkey is not conscious of its virtue or its vice; it has not, like the man, a moral sense or conscience. It is the conscious feeling what a good and clever creature he is, and *ought* to be, the sense and duty of being it, which constitutes man's superiority. Here, however, as with reason, the function is never at its best in him except when it is so ingrafted in structure as to be unconscious; it is while in the making and yet imperfect that it is self-conscious; and certainly at its lowest, in the lowest specimens of mankind, it does not rise above monkey-level, nay, goes in degeneracy far below it or any animal level. What is manifest is that, as with reason, the consciousness is but attendant, and that the actual working agency in the process of moral growth is the nervous structure, whose finely achieved organization is thereafter necessary to its continuance. Mental organization is incorporate mind, and the laws of its best structuralization are the laws of reason and morality. When the fine cerebral substrata of its moral organization are effaced by disease all moral feeling vanishes: erase the structure, and the function perishes with it.

When we consider truly the social life of ants, so perfect of its kind and so striking as a whole, it plainly appears that it has been the occasion of more unintelligent admiration than

* Bates, *op. cit.*

intelligent meditation. Counting social life essentially a human prerogative, men for the most part overlook what it really is and means in insects; it is as much as they do to give it the salute of a passing verbal acknowledgment. Yet in industry, in war, in plunder, in specialization of labour, in foresight, in diligence and discipline, in individual self-sacrifice to secure the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the ants have anticipated, if not exceeded, human co-operation; they have realized the socialistic ideal of a commonwealth which is wealth in common and established the most stable social system in the world. The foraging ants on the Amazons which hunt for prey in regular bodies or armies march some in single file through the forest, others in broad columns of countless thousands, sixty or seventy yards long, instantly breaking line to attack furiously any intruding object. On the march they throw off here and there a thinner column from the main one to forage on its flanks, and to re-enter it after it has done its work; a few individuals on the outside of the column are seen to trot rearward for a short distance and then turn to follow the same course as the main body, these rearward movements going on continually from one end of the line to the other, and the individuals stopping very often to touch with their antennæ one or other of the forward marchers. Big-headed ants, in the proportion of one to about twenty of the smaller ants, carrying nothing apparently but their official authority, trot along outside the column at pretty regular intervals, like subaltern officers in a marching regiment of soldiers. Indeed, were a regiment of soldiers on the march seen at so great a distance as to seem no bigger than ants, the spectacle would be very similar; while to a being so much bigger than a man as he is bigger than an ant it might appear as wonderful in such little creatures as it now to him appears wonderful in the ants.*

* One species hunts not in columns but in dense phalanxes of myriads of individuals, their rapid march throwing all the rest of the animal world into a state of alarm and commotion wherever they pass. Soft-bodied and inactive insects have no chance, but fall an easy prey to them; they tear them in pieces for facility of carriage, the smaller ants taking the smaller and the larger ants the larger pieces.

Another species was found sinking mines to a depth of eight or ten inches on

When the regiments, tired by their labour, need rest they take it in sunny nooks of the forest, the main columns and the branch-columns keeping their relative positions. Then, instead of the march forwards with the plunder-raids to the right and left, some ants are seen to walk slowly about, others to be brushing their antennæ with their forefeet, one here and there to be cleaning and brushing another. Their actions are just what those of so many mortals engaged in similar business might be: how indeed could they be otherwise? If living matter, organized in the shape of ants, is to combine in social co-operation, so as to form and maintain itself as a society in the struggle with its environment, it must needs do so in conformity with fixed laws of social growth; it cannot but do on a smaller scale and in more simple and general fashion what similar living matter, more complexly organized in human shape and united in social co-operation of individuals, does on a larger scale and in more special and complex fashion in its struggle to maintain and increase its social life. In both cases the formation and maintenance of the social structure of the community implies definite laws of social co-operation in the making and maintenance of it; and without doubt these are as fixed as any other natural laws, mechanical or chemical. The same complex end involves the same kind of special acts to accomplish it. The result is as natural and necessary in the social domain as certain proper movements of the body are natural and necessary in relation to such conditions of the physical environment as air, heat, gravitation, forms of matter.

Such then is the clever co-operation of ants in means of mutual help for the conservation of the kind. Some of them

an inclined bank of light earth, in order to extract the bodies of a bulky species of ant on which they feed. When by mutual help they had dragged up a body it was seized and torn to pieces by others in waiting, and carried off in fragments. As the shafts deepened in digging the miners had to climb up the sides with each pellet of earth, but comrades at the mouth of the shaft there relieved them of it and carried it to a sufficient distance to prevent it rolling in again.—BATES, *op. cit.*

To build walls, dig mines, construct tunnels, cut up carcases, march in regiments under officers, place sentinels on duty, co-operate intelligently in work and war—are not these remarkable triumphs of a minute nervous organization without help of mind? *Pereant omnes qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*, mind might say to such minute organization.

show a still greater skill, though of less moral tincture, who make slaves and employ them to do the hard work of the community, just as the Athenian democracy shrewdly did during its brief spell of glory; while others, implicitly sure that the law of organic progress is specialization, set apart soldiers to do the fighting. No less purposely co-operative are they in the means they use for the propagation of the kind—in carefully nursing, combing, cleaning, polishing, and feeding the queen, and in feeding the larvæ; rushing busily to and fro, ever hasting, never resting, making rapid communications with their antennæ as they meet and pass one another. To preserve the kind and to continue it are the two great aims which, with a human-like conceit of the importance of the species in the universe and pious devotion to its service, they pursue in all their busy labours.

In their social co-operation to the ends of a peaceful industrialism how completely is egoism swallowed up in altruism! The individual lives only for his kind; loves his neighbour as himself; dreams not of personal aggrandisement, not even of personal reproduction; cares only for the well-being and the immortality of the kind. A Comtist kneeling reverently before the Supreme Being of humanity, adoring its past progress, applauding its present strivings, discerning in its aspirations the blessed hope and promise of future progress to unimaginable heights, could hardly show or demand a more absolute reverence and devotion to his kind.

If such adoring worship of the kind by the ants be not religion—albeit it is of the essence of religion—or at all events not a religion of sufficient merit to be given the title, they still show superior and more abstract worship. A worship of the productive force in nature, not in gross phallic form practised by a low human kind, but in their pious devotion to the queen as the reproductive organ of the species: the sort of worship fundamentally which at a higher mental remove becomes the human worship of the sacred principle of motherhood.

Seeing how perfectly ants have realized the moral ideal of that peaceful industrialism which is proclaimed now to be the proper aim of human endeavour, it were a curious enquiry

to make whether it is the destiny of a perfecting human society to reach at last a similar state of perfect ant-like social co-operation; a state in which immorality shall have no place, the categorical moral imperative ruling imperiously, since everybody will be instinctively or mechanically moral. A peace indeed which sexual passion, cause of so many woes to mankind, shall cease from troubling, because reproduction will be provided for in appointed social ways, not for the selfish and reckless gratification of the individual, but solely for the propagation of the kind; perhaps as among social insects by the selection of a number of breeders to be specially fed, groomed, cared for, and set apart for the purpose. As it is not to be supposed that ants were always in their present blessed state of peaceful social union, but on the contrary pretty certain that they went through much painful travail of transition to attain to it in the remote ages of developing ant-life on earth, we may be sure that their nervous system once possessed a plasticity which it no longer possesses now that it is set to its fixed and apparently final form: the plasticity was a necessary quality of the forming and perfecting organism, it is no longer a quality of the formed and perfected work. To stereotype the human kind in a like peaceful immobility must necessarily involve a like loss of nervous plasticity; and that will mean the suppression of those individual variations and their embodied impulses which disturb human society now, but its members fondly think make for progress. Though such an outlook of moral stagnation in perfected morality seem but flat and insipid, a somewhat dreary and monotonous prospect, still it may be that as ants have shown men the way of social life on earth they are ordained to show them also what is to be the end of it.

Observation and consideration of the ways of ants at all events prove that their nervous system contains implicitly theories of social life which man's reason does not invent, only sets forth expressly in knowledge. His mental superiority lies in knowing what he does and in learning to do more: he can make to himself conscious representations of that which in ants is direct reaction to immediate presentation, and use

these representations advisedly to modify future reactions. This manifest superiority he manifestly owes to the superposition in his brain of a higher order of nervous tracts—those which constitute the organization of the cerebral cortex. It is in these supreme parts of the nervous hierarchy, which the ant is devoid of, that experiences are sorted, classified, stored, and duly labelled; it is the function of such structuralized proportion and order which we denominate intelligence and reason, they are the very laws of its vital composition and organization; and it is by virtue of such superior structure and function that man has the superior order of mind enabling him to reflect on what he does, and to exult over the mean ant which has it not. But it is to go clean contrary to the teachings of sense and reason, and to ignore the positive evidence of experiment and experience, to assume that the higher order of nervous organization has no functions of its own, and cannot of itself perform rational or proportional functions implicit in its structure; and it is gratuitous to assign it and to insist it must have metaphysical help to do the kind of work which a lower order of nervous organization does in simpler fashion instinctively.

Cleverly as ants work together in society to do skilful work, it is not likely that they ever consciously imagine what they go to do. Not in one of the different senses in which the term imagination is loosely used: not the conscious imaging of a past event which is often called imagination, though it is more properly memory; nor the imaging or picturing to mind of an event to be, such as a dog may have when it is in eager pursuit of the scent of a hare which it expects every instant to see start in front of it; least of all, the productive or creative imagination which marks the highest power of the function, and the best minds only are capable of. There is plainly no imagination of the end, no conscious purpose, in the purposive reflex action: the eyelid does not think what it does when it winks to protect the eye. Nor is there imagination in purely instinctive action: the calf does not mentally foresee when, after staggering clumsily to its feet, it gets blundering hold of its mother's pap and sucks it. But it is nowise so certain that there is no sort of imagination in a

dog's play. The performances of a dog at play are notably either mimic-chase, or mimic-battle, or mimic-love; and all its eager snuffing and scenting when it is busily running to and fro along the road have reference either to creatures of a kind which it likes to pursue, or to creatures of its own kind whose traces it likes to perceive. Has it not then some kind of mental image of what its senses are so busily interested in? Are its actions nothing more than directly reflex?

The fact that a dog dreams and barks in its dream shows pretty plainly that it can form some mental images, as also do the positive hallucinations which it undoubtedly has when, gone mad, it bites savagely at friends and phantoms. Its considerable capacity of learning accomplishments, and the definite expectations which it may be taught to entertain—accomplishments and expectations answering instantly and exactly to their proper and, perhaps, nicely differenced signs—point to the same conclusion. If a ball be thrown forward high in the air a dog used to the play rushes forward the instant it sees the proper motion of throwing, and catches the ball on the bound; if, feigning to throw the ball forward as usual, the thrower trickily throws it behind him it rushes forward as before in expectation to see it drop, and, deceived, is all abroad at first; soon, however, it detects the trick which has been played it, and, watching more closely the precise manner of throwing, rushes backwards or forwards as the case requires. Therein it reasons and expects, not otherwise, though better, than the person does who having spilt salt on the table-cloth and found misfortune follow, expects to the day of his death bad luck whenever he or anyone else spills salt; but it soon does what he probably never does, it observes attentively the exact sequences of events and corrects the erroneous expectation. Is the wrong reasoning of human superstition evidence of mind, and the right reasoning of canine intelligence evidence of no mind? Yet the strange thing to see is that the mortal who hugs his superstition based on bad reasoning will be said commonly to give proof therein of imagination, whereas the animal which corrects a wrong and forms a right imagination by

sound reasoning will be refused imagination and reason. The truth is that it is much the fashion to think imagination all that, and only that, which it does when it is divorced from reason, and to see its highest flights in the vain things which it imagines when most divorced from reason.

So long as imagination is reckoned an entity which does this or that in mental function, instead of being viewed as the function of a cerebral process which may be of all kinds and degrees of activity, so long will an absolute barrier in theory, which exists not in fact, be kept up between animal and human mind, and so long will the animal be denied mental functions which it gives as good evidence of possessing as the lowest specimens of mankind. For of them it may certainly be said that their imagination does not go much beyond that sort of concrete imaging which is the memory of what has been before, projected into the expectation of what will be; the memory-inspired expectation of the old hunter which, hearing the distant cry of the hounds in pursuit of the fox, when it is trotting quietly along the road, is instantly excited and restive, looking eagerly round to see the chase appear and to start off with it.

What in any case is perplexing to those who cannot think that the proper function of the brain is to perform intelligence, who wonder, therefore, that it is not entirely inert mentally when consciousness is in abeyance, is the remarkable work which it does in dreams. That dream-dramas should have the vividness they have is not surprising, seeing that they engage the stage and the light exclusively; but why they should have the inventive fertility, the wonderful variety, the grotesque compositions, the incongruous mixtures of events, the illogical logic they have usually, yet for all that from time to time a perfect congruity and coherence of events, passes present explanation. It is beyond question that the mind can do as good work in dreams as it ever does when awake—indeed, better imaginative work; a person shall reason then sometimes quite logically, construct and judge rightly individual character, ascribing the fit action to it in events and the fit language in dialogue, put to himself sensible questions and receive apt replies, make speeches which he

finds perfectly coherent when he wakes, solve mathematical problems correctly, compose poetry which is not nonsense, invent riddles and answer them. Nobody alleges that a predesigning consciousness then goes before the imaginative work; the brain, started on a right track of function, obeys the laws of correct mental synthesis incorporate in it by nature and training. It is a striking exemplification of the real conditions of its working in the conscious function which we call imagination and thereupon imagine *an* or *the* imagination in order to perform. No doubt such coherent mental function is exceptional in dreams, albeit not more so perhaps than coherent thinking by day in most minds outside the ruts of habit, dreams generally being examples of very irregular mental compositions; not otherwise than as if chemical elements (crude though the comparison be), instead of combining according to their regular laws in proper compounds, were to go wild dances adrift into all sorts of irregular random and unstable fugitive compounds. Were the exact properties of the organic elements of the brain, their affinities and repulsions, their laws of composition and disposition, and all about their workings known as well as the properties and laws of combination of chemical elements are known, it might be possible to detect scraps or fragments of method, a kind of order of disorder, in the phantasmagoria of dreams; but the whole business is yet too complex and obscure to admit of even partial exposition.

Meanwhile dreams may yield some useful hints with respect to the working of imagination. The first reflection to suggest itself is that the imagination which works coherently in dreaming is imagination well trained by good observation and reflection in waking life. The foolish imagination will not be wise in dreams: how can the structural syntheses of faulty components be perfect? The good fruit, when it chances, is nowise a gift of inspiration to weak minds during sleep; it is the natural production of a strong mind on lines of function in respect of which its ordinary thought is coherent and rational. Such habitually steady reflection being rare, since the daily imaginations of most minds are hardly less incoherent, fantastic, and futile than the imaginations

of their dreams, the marvel would be if they ever did chance to dream soberly and sanely—if unruly imaginations then followed right rules. What then is the moral for the waking imagination? That it can only work soundly when it has been so steadily and sanely informed by right observation and reason as to mature in silent gestation the offspring which in due season it brings forth into conscious light.

Another truth which dreams exemplify is the spontaneity and exceeding activity of imagination, whereby it comes to pass infallibly that, if not set and kept to orderly work, it runs riot in disorderly work. That it may be allowed to do in play if its ramblings, when it thus gambols, are appraised after their kind —that is, as wanton exercises of play, not serious things.

Yet another fact of which note ought to be taken is the vivid intensity of its dreaming presentations, which seem to have a more distinct objective reality than the objects of real life. This effect they owe to the absence of present impressions on sense from without, which are never so completely shut out in waking life, to their standing out by themselves brightly in the full light of consciousness because all around is in darkness, and to their separate activity unrestrained by the ordinary associations which, silently or openly acting in the daytime, are now suspended. However great a waking joy or deep a waking sorrow, it is never quite exclusive. Besides the impressions, conscious and unconscious, of present sense, which fail not to affect it, there are deep in mind always a silent reference to the past and a silent regard to the future; sub-conscious reflections, never quite mute, which restrain and qualify it. These being absent in dreams, the result is a sense of reality more vivid than real sense commonly is and an apocalyptic height of delight, if the dream be a dream of delight, and an absymal depth of woe, if the dream be a dream of woe, which exceed any waking joy or woe. Only in the extraordinary waking state of a rapt ecstasy of joy or horror, such as is exhibited in some forms of mental disorder, do we observe a like effect from like causes; the entranced soul of the "ecstatic" being then either dissolved in a deliquium of delight or cramped in a convulsion of horror.

Lastly, in the character and composition of dreams one may

take note of the same factors that work in waking imagination to determine the forms of the composition. The present mood of mind manifestly counts for much, whether it be due to internal bodily causes or to external moral causes; for it inspires the tone of feeling directly, and thus acts indirectly to summon and marshal the forms and combinations of characters and events that sort with it. Also the natural temper of the individual mind fails not to manifest itself in the character of the created drama; an impetuous nature is not meek nor a meek nature impetuous in the various scenes of it. And again, the unexhausted effects of the recent experiences of the day, whether conscious, barely conscious, or unconscious experience, frequently prove their latent activity by the part they take in dreams of the night; for although some impressions seem to be unnoticed at the time or, if noticed, forgotten immediately afterwards, yet their stimulated nerve-tracts retain an irritability or sub-conscious activity which disposes them to enter easily again into conscious activity. Such dream-instances go to show how essentially character, temper, and experience, recent and remote, enter into the working of waking imagination.

The one broad fact which dreams strongly exemplify is the plastic power of the brain to work up the materials of experience, whether old experience incorporate in structure or recent functional experience, into new mental compositions—to perform, in fact, synthetic or so-called imaginative work of the most varied character. That these productions are usually fantastic and absurd is no matter: what else could be expected, seeing that the conditions under which the brain works in sleep exclude the constant impressions on sense from the surroundings and the habitual associations of ideas which do so much to hold the waking brain to definite tracts of activity and preclude nearly all other activity in many brains. However monstrous and incongruous the products, they are still natural; the effects and evidence of laws of composition gone astray in disorder. That we cannot tell how and why they have gone wrong is proof only that we do not yet understand them, not proof that they will not be understood some day.

Errors of organic formation are not, after all, confined to processes of imagination; other organic processes sometimes go ludicrously astray. What dream-folly is more ridiculously incongruous than the combination of male and female organs in the body of the hermaphrodite?* Or more grotesquely hideous than some of the monstrous births, the so-called monsters or monstrosities which in early ages were worshipped as divine; at a later period were viewed with dismay as portents of calamities to come; in the Middle Ages were attributed to vile cohabitations of women with the devil? Meanwhile they were neither divine nor portentous, nor diabolic, nor unnatural; they were the natural production of laws of organic formation gone astray in their operation from causes and by ways not yet understood; only deemed supernatural, just as comets, madness, and other events out of the regular order of things once were, because they were mysteries. It has been the way in human thought for obscurities to be mysteries and for mysteries to be supernatural.

Let the theory of mind be what it may, it is certain that its function of imagination rests on an organic process which is not of different order of being from other organic processes. There is nothing specially divine in it, except in so far as it is the expression of the productive energy of nature and represents, when at its best, the process of evolution carried a step further than it has reached before; thus bespeaking the unsearchable behind the phenomenal, the *natura naturans* beneath the *natura naturata*. It is equally certain that the exact study of the structure of individual imagination, not any vague disquisition on imagination in general, is the proper aim of positive psychology; ever fruitless and profitless must

* An incongruous form, however, with the plastic representation of which by art for art's sake one of the most distinguished of the neuropathic school of modern French poets fell passionately in love, finding in it the most complete type of beauty! It was Théophile Gautier who declared that he knew not nor could conceive anything "*plus ravissant au monde* que ces deux beautés si égales et si différentes qui n'enforment plus qu'une supérieure à toutes deux."

Chimère ardente, *effort suprême*
De l'art et de la volupté,
Monstre charmant, comme je t'aime
Avec ta multiplie beauté.

Such his passionate adoration of the statue of the hermaphrodite!

the studies be which ignore its true rational foundation, its right intellectual nourishment and training, and the inherent limits of its sane work. It is not imagination which functions in mind and imagines well or ill as it will; it is mind which functions in imagination and imagines well if well-endowed and well-informed. Let its aim be, then, to realize its responsibilities: as the past is a dream of what has been, the present a dream of what now is, the future a dream of what will be, so to fashion and exercise itself as to dream well, if possible—at all events, as well as possible—the dream of life. For what in the end is life but a dream with the eyes and other senses open? Nay, what the life of mankind on earth so far but a bad dream of nature?

PART II.

UNSOUND MENTAL ACTION.

CHAPTER I.

MENTAL MALFORMITIES.

TO run a distinct line of division between sound and unsound mental functions, however much to be wished in theory, is impossible in fact, since there are intermediate states of development and disorder making an unbroken gradation from the sanest to the insanest thought and feeling. Mental pathologists have not taken due account of this truth in their studies of morbid psychology, though they have not entirely overlooked it. Their business being to treat insanity of mind as disease or madness, they have not concerned themselves with the instances in which it is not disease in the proper sense of the word, but irregular and defective function—deformity rather than derangement of intellect; not organic machinery in disorder, but organic machinery of bad order of construction and function.

It is from no want of obtrusive self-assertion that such instances are neglected; for while malformities of body, being simply disabling, are fitted to excite compassion in others, malformities of mind are often such active causes of trouble and annoyance in the world that they provoke anger and contempt. A person of lame body, knowing his infirmity, or at all events knowing it to be no superiority, probably tries to hide it; but a person of lame mind is so far from knowing his infirmity that he commonly esteems himself above those who are well-formed mentally, and thrusts it forwards. He can see himself reflected bodily in a glass and so project his body mentally; he cannot by any ingenuity of introspective skill see his mind and project it into an object of external apprehension —cannot contemplate his own contemplating faculty, appreciate his own appreciating power. It would be a bad thing for the

sane world were the intuition of individual self-consciousness in such case, or perhaps in any case, appraised by common judgment at the price which it puts upon itself.

There is a large class of peculiar persons much differing from one another, who, agreeing in being unlike the majority of people of their age and country in their modes of thought, feeling, and action, have their several tendencies to deviation from the common nature described as eccentricity; instead of moving in the common orbits of human thought and feeling, they evince impulses to start from them—are eccentric. All insane persons are eccentric, but all eccentric persons are not insane. From a practical point of view any one may be permitted to be as eccentric as he pleases, to go as much as he likes off the beaten track of thinking, feeling, and doing, so long as his deviations or vagaries do not compromise social order; but there is a point of nonconformity at which the body social must interfere to protect itself if it is to continue in well-being. Unbounded licence for erratic individuals to do as they like would be incompatible with the holding together of the framework of the special society. From another point of view eccentricities of thought and conduct have their curious interest, inasmuch as from time to time they turn out to be mental variations that initiate new and useful developments; rarely and exceptionally, no doubt, but still here and there, and now and then.

It is proper to note that special sensibilities with singular talents of thought or performance in particular departments of knowledge or art go along sometimes with signal eccentricities; an extraordinary development of one part of the mind being compatible with a deformed or very defective condition of other parts of it, however awkwardly the fact may conflict with metaphysical notions of mind as something which, having spiritual unity, has not extension or parts and cannot be divided. Moreover, a shallow intensity of temperament whereby a narrow notion is hugged with exclusive fervour, without regard to limitations and qualifications, and pushed with acrid energy, without regard to occasions and hindrances, is sometimes a useful practical force in the world, as I have already pointed out. To see an aim clearly

and distinctly from a special standpoint, to feel no distrust of it because it is a deviation from received opinion, to have the mind so engrossed by it as to be insensible to the ridicule and opposition which it encounters on all hands, is an excellent thing when the notion has truth and life in it. The spectacle, at all events, is a redeeming exception to the servile conformity which is the habit of the multitude's mind.

But it ought to be well understood that a person of such quality of thinking and acting is constitutionally incapable of weighing evidence, that he perpetrates habitually almost all the faults of bad observation and reasoning which it is possible to perpetrate, and that the quality, in extreme degree, is the fanatical note of madness. When he is right it is not his merit, since it is not by virtue of right observation and reasoning on his part; it is a lucky peradventure, the happy fortune of his nature and circumstances. Owing to his exclusive intensity of thought and feeling, such a one is especially liable to positive hallucinations and illusions; his fervour not only transforming real impressions into the shapes of his imagination, but transporting his mental images into objective forms. People easily see then that he is wrong who do not see that the habit of mind which thus, in extreme degree, begets hallucination does not fail, in less degree, to vitiate his daily observation and thought. In no case is he to be thoroughly relied on to see and think and speak the truth; although he be a useful instrument of nature for his purpose, it is a strictly limited and special purpose; in circumstances unsuited to the exercise of his predominant quality of character—wherever accurate observation, coherent thinking, and sound judgment are required—he is impotent and useless, if not troublesome and pernicious.

Most often a person of that quality of temperament is not right but wrong, or at any rate more wrong than right. Leaving positively insane persons out of account, the people who run into the exaggerated development of one idea, or are affected with a passionate wry-mindedness of one sort or another, or go askew in eccentric impulses of feeling and conduct, occasion a great deal of annoyance and suffering, and commonly do more harm than good in the world. It falls on

others of a more wholesome and temperate wholeness of nature to make social atonement for them—to suffer for their self-indulgences, to thwart their follies, to counteract their extravagances, to smooth their difficulties, to rectify the disorders which they produce in the social body. They, meanwhile, absorbed in the narrow selfishness of their one-sided or wry-minded natures, care not sincerely for any aim except so far as it serves to gratify the modes of egoistic righteousness in which their intense and special self-love masquerades. Nevertheless, by the very intensity of their self-confidence, by their constitutional insensibility to other interests, by their fanatical zeal and singleness of purpose, they sometimes get credit for their pretensions and attract followers who look up to them as semi-inspired.

The narrow intensity of faith has two naturally ensuing effects, the one upon the individual himself, the other upon others. Intoxicated with the joy of his special enthusiasm, he is like a delirious or a drunken man who rejoices in everything which he does as its own sufficient justification, needing neither explanation nor excuse; accordingly he has no distrust of himself, no desire for sounder assurance, no compunction for his disregard of the interests and opinions of others, even those which have most claim upon his consideration—no feeling but one of exultant self-satisfaction with what he thinks and does. Secondly, the intensity of belief with which he holds to a novel and seemingly forlorn opinion, his ardent devotion to it, and its final triumph in spite of opposition and against all apparent reason, when it does succeed—these are so surprising to others, who easily perceive his limitations, that the success seems more than natural, not to be accounted for except by supernatural help.

Thus it has been that religious impostors have arisen and flourished. Not consciously insincere at the outset, perhaps, they have first deceived themselves, then imposed upon others, and in the end, by the reflex effect upon themselves of the admiration and reverence of which they were the objects, have become more or less conscious impostors, affecting the sanctity and inspiration which their disciples ascribe to them. Wanting in intellectual wholeness and sincerity by reason of a natural

flaw of mental structure, it is inevitable that they become morally insincere. They delude others for their own gain or glory; and to delude others is a sure way to become, by a stealthy process of self-collusion, self-deluded. It is signal unreason to challenge authority and reverence for a person of this sort, tacitly or expressly, because of his burning zeal and sincerity, since he may be as little capable of correct observation, as incapable of self-observation, and as deeply sunk in self, as if he were actually insane. To christen a vice zeal is not to transform it into a virtue. His nature is not well tempered, it is intemperate, and on the way, therefore, to becoming distempered; and in any case the quality of its sincerity is very poor, for the sincerest person to self, albeit the insincerest to nature all round, is the lunatic.

The mind is not a single function or faculty, uncompounded and working always in the same simplicity and unity; it is a federation of functions or faculties which, having their divers subordinate operations and interests, are bound together into the organic unity of the whole. As the body, being a confederation of many different organs and structures, has its organic unity, whereby all parts work together in fellowship to one end, the whole in each part and each part in the whole; so the brain has its unity, as the central co-ordinating organ in which all parts of the body, directly or indirectly represented in it, are brought into relations of action and reaction, through the senses and movements, with the external world: a multiplicity in unity, its unity being a compound resultant of many parts and functions. Now it is impossible to develop one leading function or one class of functions to excess without doing so at the expense of other functions and to its own detriment; the hypertrophy of it is the inevitable atrophy of them.

Antecedent to organic structural change there is a parallel functional process of the same kind. The predominance of one line of function is the suspension or inhibition of other lines of function, before the disproportion becomes fixed in structural habit; and such disproportion of functions is literally an out-of-proportion or out-of-*ratio*, that is to say, a state verging towards what we call *irrational*. Every strong passion is *pro tanto* a passing madness. Let the predominant activity

become an abnormal hypertrophy, as by continued excess of function it will do, it then draws undue nourishment to itself, turns impressions to its own nature and shapes them to its liking, makes true observation and sound reasoning impossible. Disposition grows through habit of exercise to deformity of structure. The disproportion or out-of-ratio in structure is then the continued irrational in function. It is not now a well-formed and stable, but a deformed and unstable, mental organism which is in presence of surrounding nature, physical and human; and if it grows further in its converse therewith, it is likely to grow after the fashion of its deformity. So it comes to pass that minds of stunted, lame, and irregular development are as many and many-shaped almost as trees similarly deformed.

Mental pathologists might do well, then, to begin their treatises on mental disorders with a preliminary dissertation on mental malformities, tracing each leading variety back to its origin and through the steps of its growth; so they might throw light on the ways by which the various modes of defective observation and reasoning that spring from the biasing passions and tempers of human nature shut it out from thorough and veracious converse with facts, prevent a thorough and whole development of it, and grow perchance from generation to generation into the structural outcomes of positive mental malformities. The brain being essentially an incorporation of memories, these embodied fallacies of thought and feeling are, so to speak, so many spirits of error made flesh; their functions naturally, therefore, furnish the most striking displays of these errors, the organ giving out the kind of function which inspired its construction.

An innate propensity to a particular function signifies ancestral function of the kind in the past. A man could not think or do deceit habitually and naturally had not his forefelders thought or done deceit and in the end incorporated its spirit into the structure of his brain. If they have lived in mean spheres and comparatively simple social relations where fine feeling and self-restraint have no place, and he is launched into larger and more complex social relations where refinement and self-restraint rule, then the fundamental faults of his

nature are conspicuous.* It is sad to see how slow men are to learn and inwardly graft the organic lesson that the fate of a nature is made for it by its forefathers.

The intermediate border-land of thought and feeling between soundness and unsoundness of mind, being penumbral, has been thickly peopled with supernatural beings. It is less populous now than once it was, because, like other enchanted regions, it has been partially surveyed and taken possession of by positive knowledge, but it is still not barren of wonders. Ghost-seers and ghost-seekers are to be met with, in such numbers and of such zeal, too, in England as to have formed a society for the systematic prosecution of their researches; and they look compassionately down from their superior spiritual heights on the inferior mental qualities of those devoid of their fine spiritual sense. Great indeed will be their reward if it be that which they joyfully anticipate—to wit, the proof of the reality of the spiritual world by material evidence, the demonstration of the supernatural by natural means, the vision of the soul by the eye of the body.

Without endorsing the observations of enthusiasts, who are often signally disqualified by frame and temper of mind from observing accurately at all, and signally qualified to embrace eagerly that which suits their neurotic strain, this much reason may fairly be granted to those who seek for sensible evidence of supersensible things: first, that matter undoubtedly exists in so fine, subtile, and, so to speak, spiritualized a state as to be imperceptible to human sense, and in that condition

* One might follow the principle, through a variety of exemplifications, into the explanations of the fundamental traits of individual characters. No conscious ingenuity applied diligently to doing the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time, ever equals, or can equal, the unconscious ingenuity with which certain natures, incarnating the discordant feelings and doings of their forefathers, succeed almost invariably in doing, with the most apt inaptness, the wrong thing, or the right thing at the wrong time. Again, there are some persons uniformly unfortunate through life, who, failing in everything they put their hands to, might positively seem to have been born under an unlucky star; just as there are others who uniformly succeed. The fate which is thus inexorable against them is the fate made for them by the absence of some good or the presence of some bad quality in their organization; therefore it is invincible and always intervening to wreck their ventures. The circumstances of life become ever-recurring occasions of calling it into unfortunate exercise or of revealing its unfortunate absence.

is amazingly active; secondly, that, though we cannot then perceive it by sense, it is possible we may nevertheless be affected powerfully by it. To leap, however, from this confession to the creation of a world of spiritual beings of human kind and form is to try to go forwards by going backwards —it is to seek for the material and forms of perfecting in defective observation and thought; for certainly there has been no new discovery of laws and properties of matter in these latter days to warrant the least belief that it ever takes the invisible form and substance of a ghost.

The belief is really a reversion to the old belief of ignorant folk among whom spirits and ghosts abounded; an example of the revival or recrudescence of a still-surviving superstition, not a new conquest of scientific thought; and the method of thought pursued is none other than the old method which filled nature with spirits in the past, making the counterfeit of knowledge where no knowledge was. To think of spirit as a name for the most subtile manifestations of material substance has a seeming savour of science, seeing that, however much men may subtilize and refine matter, they who owe all the material and forms of their ideas to sensory perception cannot immaterialize it entirely, cannot really conceive spiritual existence or agency save as endowed with some of its properties; but it is signal inconsistency thereupon to make grossly sensible to eye in ghost form, or palpable to touch by a spirit-hand, or audible to ear, a material agency the essential character of which is a tenuity too fine for the appreciation of sense. Though it be allowable to transcend reason by faith in the domain of religion, since it is the fundamental postulate of religious faith to exalt the foolishness of the simple above the wisdom of the wise, it is still not lawful and right to stultify reason in its own province of natural knowledge.

CHAPTER II.

HALLUCINATIONS AND ILLUSIONS.

THAT many theories of the supernatural have had their origin and sustenance in the operations of disordered mind cannot be disputed by anyone whose knowledge entitles him to have and express an opinion on the subject. Of these disordered operations of mind the most striking outcomes notably are Hallucinations and Illusions, Mania and Delusions. Their nature, origin, and significance I go on now to consider briefly and summarize compendiously.

By hallucination is meant such a false perception of sense as a person has when he sees, hears, touches, or otherwise apprehends as external, that which has no existence at all outside his consciousness, no objective basis—sees a person where there is no person, hears a voice where there is no voice, feels a touch when he is not touched. It is the creation of a fitting outward impression as cause of a special sensation where the impression is not made; and it takes place in accordance with the well-known physiological law that it is possible, by stimulating artificially the trained nerve-centres of perception, to produce the same kind of perception, and quite as vividly, as the natural stimulus of the proper external object produces. When there is an external object to excite the perception, but the nature of it is mistaken (far the most common case), it is usual and useful to describe the effect as illusion, although it is not possible in nature to draw a distinct line always between hallucination and illusion.

Obviously a person may have both hallucination and illusion without derangement of the understanding; but the false perception is then commonly a transitory event which he is able to appreciate and correct by suitable experience. No

one has any difficulty in recognizing the internal origin of the flash of light which he perceives after a smart blow on his eye, and he who hears a roaring noise in his ears after hanging his head low down knows very well that the cause of the sound is not outside himself.* But if the impact and force of a blow were so exactly limited and so nicely measured as just to produce the special perception of a special sense and no more, he could hardly then help believing in its temporary reality.

These examples illustrate one cause and mode of production of hallucinations, namely, a disturbance or disorder of the special nerve-centres of perception. It is of no present concern whether that disturbance be a direct molecular commotion of their nerve-elements or the secondary effect of a disordered supply or quality of the blood by which their structure is nourished. The disturbance being temporary, the hallucinations disappear with its disappearance. In deeper and more lasting brain-disorders a similar cause produces more decided and lasting hallucinations. For example, when the mind of the fever-stricken patient begins to wander, he sees among the familiar faces around him the visions of strange faces which he knows at first are not real faces, only phantom-faces, though they are as vivid as real faces; perhaps they appear only when his eyes are shut or when the room is dark, and vanish when he opens his eyes or when the room is lit up. After a little while they are more frequent, persisting when his eyes are open and in broad daylight, so that he gets perplexed and uncertain about their reality; assents, perhaps, for the moment when assured that they are phantoms, but falls back instantly into troubled doubt. At last they get entire mastery of his belief, all uncertainty vanishes, and, distinguishing not between them and real figures, he talks to them as real persons. He is now delirious or insane.

* Müller, in his great work on Physiology, mentions the case of a man who, making his subjective flash of light do objective work, declared that he had recognized a robber on a dark night through the light produced in his own eye by a blow on it which the robber gave him. The religious ecstatic does the same kind of thing when he sees the vision of the face of God or saint and surrounds it with a halo of golden light; the Theopneustic also, who translates his delirium of thought into the voice or instreaming inspiration of God.

In the delirium of insanity it is a common thing for the sufferer to see and hear persons who are the mere phantom-creations of his disordered brain. When the delirium is acute these are so vivid and active, so dominate his senses and usurp his attention, that real persons and voices can make no true impression upon him; his mind is then cut off from the actual world by the very intensity of a turbulent activity which, inhibiting the true functions of the senses, so deranges their communications that the eye seeing sees not, the ear hearing hears not, and the touch touching feels not; like a person in a nightmare, he lives in a tumultuous ideal world, which has all or more than all the vividness of the things of the real world. When the delirium is limited, as it is sometimes when the malady is chronic, he is haunted by one or two special hallucinations which cling to him in spite of the opposing evidence of facts, albeit that, apart from them, he is capable of receiving and appreciating rightly the impressions made upon his senses. Nothing is more remarkable sometimes than the entire credence yielded to a false perception almost or quite impossible in the nature of things, and certainly of inherent absurdity in the common judgment of all the rest of the world, by one who in most other respects seems to be in possession of his senses and reason. But when he is under its dominion he is not in possession of them, for its morbid activity excludes their sane influence and possesses him.

How are we to think of it? That a certain limited area or tract of the brain has taken on a morbid action, having broken loose from its natural vital equipoise with surrounding parts and functions, and now keeps up by nutrition and exercise the abnormal equilibrium into which it has settled. The bad function entails a growth to the habit of it. The process might be likened to that by which a morbid growth or tumour in the midst of healthy structure follows its private laws of self-regarding function and development, without respect to the claims and restraints of the sound structure from some element of which it perhaps made the first start of its growth into the foreign invader that it now is; or to an old-standing muscular spasm which, having

become habitual, continues to work on its own account, without relation to the normal physiological movements among which the muscles engaged in it ought to take their co-ordinate place and part. Of such limited morbid brain-function the mental outcome would be a fixed hallucination. Viewed in that light, its exclusive growth in the mental confederation is an apt physiological illustration of a supreme growth of egoism and a correlative decay of altruism.

It is easy enough to demonstrate the physical causation of hallucinations, for they can be produced artificially by suitable variation of the blood. If anyone swallows a poisonous dose of belladonna, he falls into a state of unquiet and busy delirium in which he sees before him unreal persons to whom he chatters and unreal objects at which he stares and grasps, and is restlessly engaged in unreal transactions; all these puzzles of the brain disappearing and he returning to his right senses when the poison which, circulating in it, deranges its functions, is removed from the body by the organs of excretion. He has not the least doubt of the objective reality of the visionary objects so long as he is under its influence; he has not the least doubt of their entirely visionary nature as soon as he is freed from its poisonous effects. The tainted thought bespeaks the tainted blood.

A frequent co-operating factor in this production of hallucinations by direct disturbance of the nerve-centres of perception, of which due account should be taken, is a native bent of the centres themselves to irregular action: they tend to what they end in. It was noticed how in fever the reason at first resisted the hallucinations—as sane life always reacts to defend or save itself from threatened hurt—and only afterwards, as the disorder augmented, succumbed to them. Although the strongest reason could not withstand the invasion if the physical commotion were great enough, yet there is no doubt that brains differ much in natural stability, possessing different native powers of resistance to shocks, and that some brains fall into delirium from causes which would not disturb others so deeply. Now, it is in those that have an innate bend to irregular function, owing to a predisposition to insanity, epilepsy, or allied nervous disorder, that the

confederate centres, being more loosely bound together and more prone to act separately, are more likely to suffer dissolution of function. Where co-order is weak, disorder is easy. Then a slight cause may suffice to produce delirium—for example, a moderate fever, or a strain of emotion, or a pressure of overwork, or some other cause which would do no serious hurt to a strong brain whose centres were stably organized. Moral causes of madness mostly mean fault in the mental fabric.

That which easily falls into disorder easily continues in disorder. A not infrequent event where the supreme federal government is naturally weak, owing to an inherited instability of the confederate nerve-centres, is the persistence of hallucination after the general delirium has passed away; one cerebral tract or area continues to keep up its morbid function after the rest have regained their normal equilibrium. Usually the morbid experience is corrected after a time by the sane experience of converse with men and things which contradicts it; but not always. The person who seems to have returned in all other respects to his senses remains in that one respect out of his senses. Now, if one of the features of his delirium perchance was the conviction that he heard a voice from heaven or that he received a supernatural communication in some other way, and if the hallucination persisted after his recovery, so that he, a person of enthusiastic temper and great constitutional self-confidence, was sure of the objective reality of the supernatural experience, then it was likely in former times, however it may be now, that he would believe himself sealed and certified as a messenger or a prophet of God, one

> "chosen from above,
> By inspiration of celestial grace,
> To work exceeding miracles on earth;" *

and would draw followers after him to believe as he believed. Not so likely now in civilized countries as it was some centuries ago, seeing that the atmosphere of thought and feeling has so much changed that it yields no support, is

* As Shakespeare makes Joan of Arc say of herself. (*First Part Henry VI.*, act v. scene iv.)

almost fatal, to a superstition of the kind. Then he could scarcely fail to make proselytes, according to his opportunities, on a large or small scale; now he is pretty sure to fail to make them. But he may still attract some persons of that congenial neurotic temperament which, being commonly accompanied with a signal conceit of self, its possessors are happy to believe means a superlative spiritual sense, although medical psychologists see good reason to interpret it differently. The elective affinity of fellow-feeling naturally works to combine like elements into social compounds or societies of foolish bodies.

It has been a belief almost as old as the hills and as widespread as mankind that abnormal and morbid nervous states had a supernatural significance: that some deity or demon was at work in them. Among the ancients epilepsy was a sacred disease; it was thought to have something divine in it, as it and madness are still thought by Eastern nations to have. Its sudden and overwhelming invasion; the violence with which the whole body was instantly precipitated into convulsions, as if fearfully shaken by a demon that had taken possession of it or whose possession it was convulsively labouring to repel; the trance-like unconsciousness of the sufferer during the appalling commotion and the occasional muttering of incoherent sentences by him;—these were sufficient to give it the appearance and credit of a supernatural seizure.*

Another reason for this opinion doubtless was the vivid hallucinations which frequently go along with the seizures. If it be the hearing that is affected, a voice is heard with startling distinctness to utter threat, or command, or admonition; if it be a hallucination of vision, a figure or face is seen illuminated by a bright or coloured halo of light produced, like it, by the disturbed centres of perception; if it be the muscular sense which is troubled, there may be the

* "Master, I have brought unto thee my son which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away . . . And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him grievously; and he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming." (Mark ix. 17–20, Revised Version.)

bewildering feeling of the rising of the body into the air or of its sinking into the ground.* When the person comes to himself, the strange and startling experience of sense continues so to vibrate in his memory as to keep up the vivid impression for a time; and as he is utterly unable to account to himself for its mysterious origin, he is the more disposed to believe that he really saw or heard an angel from heaven, or had a visit from the Holy Ghost, or was carried up into heaven or down into hell. That some angelic apparitions and heavenly visions had this kind of origin is most certain.

In every large lunatic asylum at the present day are to be found epileptics who are subject to similar hallucinations in connection with their fits: vain and good-humoured often when they are free from fits, but arrogant, irritable, suspicious, and aggressive when they suffer in connection with them, they evince delusions of being Jesus Christ or some other great personage of Scripture, or of having received revelations from one or another of these personages. Dangerous beings, too, they sometimes are because of their hallucinations. For example: a few years ago a labourer in the Chatham Dockyard, who was epileptic and had once been confined as insane, suddenly killed a fellow-labourer at work near him. No motive was disclosed or discovered for the act at the time, for the men were not on bad terms; but at the criminal lunatic asylum to which he was sent after acquittal on the ground of insanity, he informed the medical officers that some years before he had received the Holy Ghost, that it came to him like a flash of light, that his own eyes had been taken out, and other eyes, like balls of fire, substituted for them. Had this man lived in an age when there was much faith in supernatural and little or no knowledge of natural things; and had he then, instead of throwing his new-born energies frantically into homicide, thrown them fanatically into a prophetic mission, declaring that the Holy Ghost had appeared to him in a vision of light, his own eyes being taken out and balls of fire put in their places; would not his

* "You see and feel it," says St. Theresa, "as a cloud, or a strong eagle rising upwards and carrying you away on its wings."

story have been accepted as true and his mission acclaimed as divine by a drove of foolish followers?*

If the tradition be true that Mahomet was epileptic, the visions which he had during so-called swoons may well have had an epileptic origin. The great change of character which he underwent and the prophetic mission which he undertook, whatever their real inspiration, followed an extraordinary vision and extreme mental commotion. The story is that, as he walked in solitary meditation in a lonely valley near Mecca, he was greeted suddenly with the words, "Hail to thee, O messenger of God!" On looking to the right hand and to the left to see whence the voice came, he saw nothing but stones and trees. It was soon afterwards that the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a vision on Mount Hira and delivered to him the message of God of which he was chosen to be the prophet. Great was his trouble of mind, however, after this visitation, so great that he went in anxious distress to Kadijah, his wife, fearing that he was possessed; and, although she comforted and reassured him, his mental agony in the subsequent conflict of feelings was such that he was several times tempted to end his life by throwing himself

* In an interesting article on "The Religious Sentiment in Epileptics," in the *Journal of Mental Science* of January, 1873, Dr. Howden gives the particulars of several cases of the kind, all of which were confined in the Montrose Lunatic Asylum. One, who tried to convert the attendants and his fellow-patients by threatening them with God's judgments, said he was "a messenger sent by God to warn men to believe and to flee from the wrath to come." Another said that he had been in heaven, and described what he saw there (his description being evidently taken from the scenery of Canada, where he had lived as a child), and declared "sometimes that he was God, at other times Christ, and not unfrequently the devil." When questioned as to the ground of his belief, he generally said that "it had been revealed to him." Another says "that she has seen her heavenly Father, and that to-morrow she is to receive the crown of glory. She converses with Christ, and receives messages direct from heaven." Another gets very excited, and labours under delusions "such as that he is in heaven, or that he is struggling with the devil, whom, in the end, he generally vanquishes." Another patient was sure for two days that he was dead and that his soul was in heaven, and, after his return to work, when he spoke rationally on every other subject but that of his vision, he continued to believe that his soul had been carried into heaven (which he described, as he, a gardener, might well do), and that the vision had been sent to him by God as a means of conversion, whereby he had become a new man. Many similar illustrations of the character of epileptic hallucinations might be adduced.

off Mount Hira. Was the vision, then, after all, the vision, and the voice the voice, of an epileptic trance?

The pious Mussulman will naturally repudiate this natural explanation of what he believes to have been a supernatural event, but the Christian will still think it the charitable interpretation of what he must else rank as imposture; biassed to the worse interpretation by the knowledge how much fraud holy Mahdis in the East are wont to mix with their prophetic pretensions. But in what light will the devout Mahometan view the miraculous vision by which Saul, the fiery persecutor of the disciples of Jesus, was converted from breathing threatenings and slaughters against them into the impassioned apostle and sagacious organizer of Christianity? "As he journeyed to Damascus, suddenly there shined round him a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou? And the voice answered, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the voice answered that he should arise and undertake the mission for which the Lord had appeared unto him—to be a minister and a witness both of that which he had seen and of those things which he should see. When Saul rose from the ground he was blind, and continued blind for three days, neither eating nor drinking all that time. This was the crisis of the profound revolution of feeling and thought which, in silent gestation doubtless for some time before, now burst forth in him, and the commencement of the apostolic mission to which he thenceforth devoted himself absolutely with enthusiastic zeal and unmatched energy. The devout Christian may resent the impious insult of a natural explanation of a miraculous event; but how can the Mahometan, whose understanding is not overawed by fit faith into a devout belief of the incredible, be expected to exhibit a similar unquestioning credence? The stultification of reason which is truth to one is still nonsense to another religion.

These illustrations, if they have the character ascribed to them, are so eminent and significant as to render other

illustrations, which would be weak by comparison, unnecessary. But many such are not wanting. Ann Lee, founder of the so-called Shakers, is said to have been epileptic; she had visions of the Saviour, who "became one with her in body and spirit." The apostle of the so-called Church of the New Jerusalem, Emanuel Swedenborg, who professed to be in daily intercourse with angels and to receive revelations from them, was subject at one time of his life to seizures which were closely akin to, if they were not actually, epilepsy.* The Siberian schamans or medicine-men who pretend to intercourse with invisible powers and with the spirits of the dead, working themselves, like the priestesses of the ancient oracle of Delphi, into a state of frenzy in which they foam at the mouth and are convulsed, always select by preference for pupils of their mysteries boys who are subject to epileptic attacks. When the breath of inspiration came upon the Delphic priestess, she cried out, "Behold the god! behold the god!" and immediately fell backward in convulsive struggles, foaming at the mouth and prophesying.† Among the Patagonians the magicians were chosen from persons seized with falling sickness or St. Vitus's dance; they were nervous and excitable men who, in uttering oracles, fell into actual convulsions.

Thus it appears clearly that in all peoples and parts of the world persons subject to epilepsy or like convulsive seizures have, by natural selection, come conspicuously to the front as the favourite organs, the most fit instruments, of supernatural inspirations. The epileptic temperament itself, apart from its ordinary conclusive incidents, seems specially propitious to that all-absorbing enthusiasm in which the mind, rapt from itself in a sort of ecstasy or exaltation of its whole energies, creates

* *Emanuel Swedenborg: his Life and Writings*, by WILLIAM WHITE. In my essay on Swedenborg, in the second edition of *Body and Mind*, I have set forth at length the facts relating to his mental state and the inferences which they warrant.

† Having prepared for, or actually provoked, the convulsions, it is said, by drinking laurel-water, the active principle of which is prussic acid.—DR. PARIS'S *Pharmacologia*.

"The insane root which takes the reason prisoner" was probably a species of poisonous fungus, such as is used at the present day in Korea to produce delirium, which is then supposed to be divine.

hallucinations and breeds the conceit of a divine inflation or possession.*

How far are these subjects of supernatural communications who fall into foamings and convulsions, seeing visions and dreaming dreams, conscious impostors? It is a question not easy to answer, since it is not possible either for themselves or others, to separate the real and the feigned in their feelings and doings. That some designedly bring on genuine convulsions and hallucinations by the mode of life which they adopt, and by the excitement which they kindle and foment, is beyond question; some too, it is certain, wilfully exaggerate phenomena which, within their control in the first instance, soon get beyond it once they have been set going; and without doubt the whole business is systematically feigned by others.

In no case, however, are they, from their point of view, the sheer impostors which they look to the cool outsider who watches the performance critically. Probably they have been imbued with the conviction of a particular esoteric function, brought up to think the work supernatural, educated in the practice of it, stimulated to exaggeration by success, and moulded to the professional feeling and habit of it by frequent performance; so that it has become their second nature, and they cannot feel, though they know, the imposture which

* Thus, indeed, was the word created in the first instance (ἔνθεος, full of God). Given a nervous, excitable, and unstable temperament to begin with; superadd to that its earnest engagement in religious exercises of thought and feeling which strain its sensibilities and powers to the utmost; and what more natural than such outbreaks of functional instability as hallucinations and convulsions? The lives of the saints abound with instances: foremost in eminence Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Order of Jesuits, who, concentrating his fervent zeal and all the energies of his faculties on the one aim of strengthening Catholicism, became subject to appropriate ecstasies and visions, hearing voices from heaven, and seeing the Virgin Mary, who encouraged him in his mission. St. Theresa was another distinguished instance. Among Protestants, George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, or so-called Quakers, may take first place, who, abandoning his family early in his life, wore for years a leathern suit which he made for himself; fasting, praying, meditating, and struggling against temptation, and ending by hearing a voice which consoled him and having revelations which astonished him. During the early years of Wesleyan Methodism there were many examples of the same kind, which John Wesley accepted and fostered as genuine supernatural phenomena.

they practise. To get outside the infected atmosphere of the familiar ceremony so as to see and feel the thing as it is and as it looks to others not like-minded is then impossible for them; they are like persons who, having been trained to the practice of habitual frauds in a particular trade or profession, lose sense of the real guilt of the fraud by growing into the conventional estimate and feeling of it as a custom of the business, although they might revolt against similar cheating presented to them for the first time in a pure atmosphere and in the naked simplicity of its real nature. In such cases there is commonly a loose mental fabric at the outset, with which native fault goes a necessary lack of thorough sincerity and stable unity of mind predisposing to inconsistencies or actual incoherences of development. The ill effect is twofold: an incapacity of the loose-knit mind to take a full and firm intellectual grasp or apprehension of the truth; a disintegration of the moral being with a consequent inability thoroughly to *feel* the truth.

Another condition of things favourable to the generation of hallucinations is severe exhaustion of brain, whether owing to mental or to bodily causes. The shipwrecked sailor, when delirious from long privation of food and drink, has various hallucinations, among others sometimes tantalizing dreams and visions of food and water, which are the illusive creations of his urgent needs.* The long fastings, the scourgings, the exposure to extreme heat and cold, and the other mortifications of the body practised by the religious ascetic, who, fleeing from the society of his kind to some desert solitude, passed a lonely life in meditation, prayers, and penances, brought his monotonously and specially exercised brain to such an isolation from the ordinary and wholesome impressions of sense, and to such a state of irritable and spasmodic weakness, that he frequently saw visions which, according to his moods of feeling, were visions of angels who consoled him in his sufferings, or visions of devils who tempted and

* Of Christ, after fasting forty days in the wilderness, Milton says—

"He slept,
And dreamed, as appetite is wont to dream,
Of meats and drinks, Nature's refreshment sweet."

Paradise Regained, bk. ii., 264.

tormented him. Of such brain-sick kind were the temptations of St. Anthony and other saints, who, in order to subdue the besetting lusts of flesh, inflicted on themselves the extremest mortifications which a perverse ingenuity could devise: the visions which they obtained in consequence were no better than the juggles of starved brains. A Mahometan receipt in successful use at the present day for summoning spirits is to fast seven days in a lonely place, burning such incense as benzoin, aloe-wood, mastic, and other odoriferous wood from the Soudan, and to read a chapter from the Koran a thousand and one times in the seven days. The entire solitude, the long fasting, the monotonous exercise of uninterested attention, the stimulation of the exhausted and irritable brain by the aromatic and acrid vapours, have such an effect in due course that drums are beaten, flags hoisted, and spirits seen full of light and of beautiful and benign aspect.*

Again we are in face of a general fact of pregnant significance: that in all places and in all times abnormal states of the nervous system, morbid and artificial, in which sense is thralled in ecstasy, have been esteemed ways of communication with the supernatural.

It happens now and then that sick persons on their death-

* *Upper Egypt: its People and Products*, p. 386, by Dr. KLUNZINGER.

It is a universal experience that fasting provokes dreams, hallucinations, ecstasies, and the like, which have been considered to be so many ways of communication with the Deity. "Amongst all the indigenous races of North America prolonged fasting is regarded as the means *par excellence* of securing supernatural inspiration. The Redskin, to become a sorcerer or to secure a revelation from his *totem*, or the Eskimo to become *Angekok*, will endure the most appalling fasts." RÉVILLE'S *Hibbert Lectures*, 1884, p. 101.

At the present time there appears to be a sect of religious enthusiasts in Russia who are known as the "Folk of the Godly Nest," the members of which, peasants of Bessarabia, are in the habit of digging a grave—a nest, they call it—in their earth-floors or gardens, where they retire and are covered over with a lid. After fasting there completely for a considerable time they assert that they see visions of saints and devils.

There was a real conformity to natural laws, whatever the supernatural agency at work, when, after His fast of forty days, Satan presented suddenly

> "A table richly spread in regal mode,
> With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort
> And savour."—*Paradise Regained*, bk. ii., 340.

beds see visions which are sometimes of a joyful, more often of an indifferent, occasionally of an appalling character. This experience, which is not limited to any country or time, or to the votaries of any religion, has most often befallen, not when death by acute disease or accident was an abrupt event, but when death by wasting disease was the gradual ending of mortality. Consumptive persons, owing to their slow decay of strength and to the frequent persistence of an irritable nervous animation even to the last, seem most liable to these death-bed visions; accordingly, many of the telling scenes that make solemn impressions on those who witness and relate them, or more often relate them as witnesses without having witnessed them, occur in deaths from this wasting disease. As the brain-functions flicker before they expire, long-forgotten scenes and faces of the past, far-off events of childhood and youth which seemed lost in oblivion, arise unbidden in memory with startling vividness and are seen as transient visions. The last word of the dying mother is perhaps to utter the name of her long dead child whose face she suddenly sees; the last act of the expiring old man to start at the sight of his mother's face as it was bent lovingly over him in childhood. The physical shock of the very instant of death, unlocking silent memories of the brain, may be the abrupt occasion of such hallucinations.*

How easy, then, to wish, and, wishing, to hope, and, hoping, to believe, that in that supreme and solemn moment is granted a fore-glimpse into the world of spirits which is just about to open!—that as the material grossness of earth falls away the nearly emancipated spirit, hovering on the brink of a new life, its vision purged of earthly dross, reaches such a state of rarefaction, exaltation, and detachment as to enjoy momentary access to the supernatural world! Those who believe so, and base on the belief the pledge and proof of a future life, ought to call to mind and ponder well this fact—that the fever-stricken

* It is a molecular flickering of the earliest-acquired cerebral reflexes when all the latest acquired are extinct, just as happens when the dying octogenarian babbles of his father and mother. In the decay of old age, at the hour of death, sometimes also in the exhaustion of a great sickness, the impressions of childhood thus revive. In the day of Judgment, therefore, all that will be needed in order to read the record will be the exposure, layer after layer, of the cerebral cortex.

savage, when abandoned to die by his companions, if he chances to recover unexpectedly and rejoin them, sometimes recounts the particulars of his visit to the world of spirits during the crisis of his disease, telling a detailed story of doings of his dead relatives there much like their gross doings when on earth.*

The sober question, of course, is whether, during the final decay of faculties in the last stage of mental and physical prostration, when life flickers in its ashes and the dying person is capable only of a few signs of feeble animation, there is suddenly opened in him a power and kind of insight the like of which he never had when he was strong and well. Is it lawful to base on the expiring energies of a brain which "doth by the feeble comments that it makes foretell the ending of mortality" the momentous conclusion of living beings in a supernatural world? If it be, then the necessary conclusion is that all the insight of man when he is in full vigour of mind and body, and all the knowledge which he has painfully accumulated through the natural avenues of sense, are products of a method of observation and reflection which has no voucher of lasting validity, but, being of provisional value only, may be discredited and supplanted at any moment by the sudden opening of a special spiritual vision; and the further conclusion may follow, that this sort of vision, contrary to all natural experience, will be at its best when life is at its worst, the soundest mind be displayed in the unsoundest body.

What in such case would be the right aim and the bounden duty of a devout person who was eager to attain to the knowledge of things spiritual? Or the right aim of everybody who viewed things visible and temporal as of the meanest moment in comparison with things invisible and eternal? To follow the revolting example of the unclean ascetic by subjecting his body systematically to the severest fastings, scourgings, and other mortifications, in order to reduce vitality to its lowest ebb and spirituality to its highest power. On the other hand, if such visions be only the delirious comments of expiring brain-energies, the right conclusion is that so far from sustaining the theory of a spiritual life they inculcate the duty of investigating

* For ample evidence, see TYLOR'S *Primitive Culture*.

all supernatural converse in the light of their natural origin and being; whereupon the further conclusion may perhaps follow, that a sane body is the surest foundation of a sane mind.*

It is a simple question of scientific probability in the end, since revelation, though it guarantee the spiritual world, does not guarantee the sick man's particular vision of it. Does the brain delirious before death see a phantom-vision, such as is confessedly seen often in similar brain-states, or is a gift of supernatural insight then vouchsafed for the first time? Some questions require only to be sincerely and clearly stated to be self-answered: that they are ever questions at all is because they are not clearly conceived and sincerely stated.

* I am dealing here only with physical disorder as the occasion of positive hallucination; but the lesson of the fact is a large one, for it ought always to be borne in mind, in relation to observation, that similar disorder of a milder character, of which the individual may be entirely unaware, produces its proportionate effects in causing *error* of sense and thought. Nothing can be more foolish in most cases than to receive the counsels of a dying man regarding important practical events as if they were pure and sacred wisdom: they commonly reflect and betray the weakness of his expiring nature. Experienced lawyers know well how much the provisions of a will made in such circumstances are at the mercy of the suggestions or persuasions of those who are prompting or assisting the dying man in the business. "I am afraid to say," remarked an old family lawyer, "how many wills I have made in my time"! Whosoever wishes to have a truly disposing mind in making his testamentary bequests will not put off the business until he has only a death-bed judgment; nor will a logical mind put off repentance for its sins to a death-bed repentance, seeing that the person who repents then and receives absolution is not the person whose sins are repented and need absolution.

CHAPTER III.

HALLUCINATIONS AND ILLUSIONS
(Continued).

THE foregoing examples of hallucinations illustrate their mode of origin in direct disturbance of the senses or of their sensory nerve-centres or tracks; originating there they then impose themselves upon belief. The person has not seen nor heard what he was thinking or believing at the moment, but has been made to think or believe what he seemed to hear or see. Not otherwise than as happens often in dreams, where the strange visions and notions arising in the mind, as they do, without any co-operation of will and following no order of relation and succession, have been universally thought to signify supernatural instruction. We have Solomon's authority for it that "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, then God openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." Prudent judgment will note the rash dictum without acknowledging that the wisest man of his time is the wisest of all time.

It now remains to consider the mode of origin of hallucination in the reverse order—namely, in a vividly conceived notion or belief which imposes itself upon sense. For the senses and reason reciprocally trick one another; and as the senses present subjective impressions as objective and deceive thought, so thought in turn subjugates the senses sometimes, compelling them to perceive purely internal impressions as external objects.

Here I may call to mind what was previously said concerning the nature of ordinary perception: how that in each perception a person for the most part sees only a very small

part of that which he thinks he sees, the mind contributing from the stock of its former experience what is necessary to fill up the image. The visual impression is never more than a sign to which experience has taught him to give its proper meaning—a sign which, without the complementary contributions of the instructed mind, would be meaningless, just as a written or spoken word of foreign language is meaningless to one who has not been instructed what to mean by it. It is (to use physical imagery) one of several terminals to a track at which the current of that track may be excited, the current thereof being, when complete, the perception; a true perception, therefore, if every sensory point or terminal can (as tacitly assumed) excite the perception-current when struck by its fit stimulus from the object—for example, either sight, or touch, or taste, or smell, excite the idea of an orange. Of ordinary perception it may be truly said, then, that it is in great part illusion, no one, on occasion of it, actually having nearly so much of the objective experience as he seems to have; he sees a part only, which, being sufficient to suggest the whole, is the symbol of much that he does not see but takes for granted. It is an illusion, however, which the test of a complete experience, were it made, would prove to be well grounded in reality; a theory which would be verified by facts were rigorous verification made; a sort of promise to pay on demand which, when presented, would be met by instant payment.

Here is manifest an easy opening for illusion and the source of one of the most common causes of erroneous observation. The active idea in the mind, if it fit not the perception, dominates and thus prevents true perception by forestalling it; and it is evident that a subjective activity of the kind, short of the degree necessary to cause actual hallucination, will suffice to cause illusion and error. Only by the test of actual experience can it be proved to be ungrounded, or not well grounded, in reality—proved, that is to say, to be a promise of reality which cannot be met, or met adequately, by payment on demand. And the worst of it is that the individual, because he is at the same time the experimenter and the subject of experiment, cannot make a sincere and rigorous

application of the test of experience; the promise has been made to himself, who by secret self-collusion shrinks from exacting full payment. The wise man in that case, knowing that he stands not alone, independent and self-sufficing in the social system, will have recourse for corrective help to the accredited standard of the common experience of his kind. No one can go to look, or to taste, or to feel, having a strongly preconceived notion of what it is that he is going to see, taste, or touch, but is pretty sure to have a mistaken perception—to perceive that which he thinks the thing, not what it is really: the mental prepossession prevents a true possession of the object. The effect is of the same kind as, though of less degree than, that exhibited by one who, having been put into a so-called mesmeric or hypnotic trance, so that most of his mental functions are in abeyance, sees, hears, touches, or smells whatever he is boldly assured by the operator that he sees, hears, touches, or smells, and does so even when there is no proper impression at all made upon sense—perceives, that is, as he needs must, in the terms of the suggested and solely active idea.*

A proved efficient cause of hallucination, then, is a vividly conceived idea, so intense and so isolated thereby from transmission of its energy along the tracks of other ideas in reflection that it is projected outwards into what seems an actual perception—in the case of sight, for example, a mental image so vivid as to become a visual image; in the case of hearing, an idea so vivid as to become a voice.†

The traditional habit of separating mind from body by an impassable chasm of origin, nature, and destiny leads to an ever-recurring astonishment at striking instances of the workings of mind in bodily processes as if the instances were singular, outside the usual order of nature, to be wondered

* A truth of which Shakspeare's 113th Sonnet is a condensed exposition.

† That the hallucination should be seen more vividly and seem more real sometimes than the actual object is not surprising when we reflect that perception is always an internal experience, and that in this case the very intensity of the experience, by virtue of which, or of its almost isolated activity, it creates the object, must naturally make the impression more vivid and therefore more real. How can he think that less real which is really more real to him?

at strangely; so much so that professed psychologists believe that they concede much to physiology and impregnate their own speculations with a physiological savour when they interpolate the facts as incongruous excrescences on their systems, without being at the pains or having the capacity to assimilate them. There is nothing more wonderful in the mind's action on the body than in the heart's action on the individual's feelings of warmth or well-being, such operations of it being as natural, constant, and necessary as any other physiological process: not an organic motion which does not help to make a mood, not a mood which does not affect an organic process. Here, as elsewhere, wonder, craning at extraordinary, takes no note of ordinary, instances.

How many times and to how many persons has it happened to discover that the vivid expectation of pain on moving a rheumatic muscle intensifies the pain when the movement is made; which may indeed be made sometimes without any pain at all when the attention is distracted from it? Yet how little has the physiological lesson of the familiar fact, no less instructive than a thousand more striking facts of the same sort, been marked and appreciated. Set sense on the attentive bent, and it is inevitably more quick to feel, and feels more keenly, the impression which it awaits. It is within every one's experience that the keenly expectant idea of a particular sensation in a part of the body suffices sometimes to cause the sensation; and there are persons who, going further than that, can see or feel what they conceive vividly. Sir Isaac Newton said of himself that he could at any time call up a spectrum of the sun in the dark by intense direction of his mind to the idea, "as when a man looks earnestly to see a thing which is difficult to be seen." Goethe had a similar power of making certain mental images sensible to sight, as some persons have habitually; and the great French novelist, Balzac, alleged that when he wrote the story of the poisoning of one of the characters in his novel by arsenic he had so distinct a taste of arsenic in his mouth afterwards that he was himself poisoned and vomited his dinner.* All the more instructive and effective proof of the power of imagination over sense,

* M. Taine (*De l'Intelligence*) is the authority for this statement.

seeing that arsenic owes its favour with the secret poisoner in great measure to its being nearly tasteless!

Mental representation so intense as to become mental presentation is a faculty of mind apt especially to be met with among certain artists. It was very remarkable in that strange and eccentric genius, William Blake; he used habitually to see his conceptions as actual images or visions. "You have only to work up imagination to the state of vision and the thing is done," was his account of the process. Dr. Wigan relates the sadly instructive story of a skilful painter whom he knew, and who, before going mad, painted portraits with a marvellous rapidity, having painted as many as three hundred in one year. The secret of his rapidity and success was that he required only one sitting and painted with extraordinary facility. This was the unfortunate painter's account of his method:—

"When a sitter came I looked at him attentively for half an hour, sketching from time to time on the canvas. I wanted no more; I put away my canvas, and took another sitter. When I wished to resume my first portrait I took the man and sat him in a chair, where I saw him as distinctly as if he had been before me in his proper person—I may almost say more vividly. I looked from time to time at the imaginary figure, then worked with my pencil, then referred to the countenance, and so on, just as I should have done had the sitter been there. When I looked at the chair I saw the man."*

After a time, however, he lost the power of discriminating between the imaginary and the real person, addressing the one as if he were the other, became insane, and was sent to an asylum. By will and practice he had so intensified the imaginary picture as to make it more real than the object, whereupon the thus fortified unreal became the centre round which a morbid mentation revolved.

A special instruction of these examples lies in the illustration which they furnish of the kind of mental constitution most apt to project the subjective image into objective form, and of the harm which the habit of the practice does to the mental solidarity; for its inevitable tendency is to loosen more the confederate bonds which its occurrence at all shows

* *The Duality of the Brain*, by ALFRED WIGAN, M.D.

to be weak and loose enough naturally. It is not because the unstable temperament occurs in an adult that it is any more sane and safe fundamentally than the sensitive and highly imaginative temperament of the nervous child which sees its musings as actual scenes and events, dying eventually perhaps of water or of tubercle on its brain.

Not in a one-sided activity and culture, moreover, but in a many-sided exercise and culture, is the best physical and moral management of it; the end to be aimed at being to inform, strengthen, and consolidate the weak and loose mental constitution of the brain, by training it systematically to a just estimate of the proportion of things and of self, and incorporating their just ratios into its reason. Let it be well ballasted with the common sense of the kind. What is good judgment but well-developed, well-balanced, well-knit faculties? And what are faculties but mental structures that have been severally organized to do special functions and require to be combined in unity of good action?

To seek and affect the special circumstances that suit a predominant special quality of character, as the natural affinity is, is not the way to improve and strengthen the character as a whole; the right way to do that is to train the character to suit any circumstances. Certainly it will be a question of native constitution of mind how far that can be done successfully. If it cannot be done, one may be content to see the special faculty utilized to its utmost, even though it be at a ruinous cost to the individual. A capacious and largely endowed nature, like Goethe's, is capable of many-sided culture and activity; a person like Blake, if he had not been what he was, might have been nothing and died in a lunatic asylum. So extreme and narrow is the warp of a nature sometimes that to go against it entirely would be to destroy the nature.

The voluntary intensification of idea unto the pitch of hallucination is much helped always, exceeded often, by involuntary intensification of it owing to strong emotional agitation, to which weak brains are specially liable; for the equilibrium of the centres and the consequent poise of their faculties are thereby easily overthrown. A stronger-built and more compactly wicked mind than Macbeth's might have gone

through the fearful tumult of conflicting feelings which he went through, and have done the bloody work which he did, without succumbing to the humiliating hallucinations of the dagger and of Banquo's ghost; and a person of larger sympathies, more solid judgment, and less intense self-love might have done all that Brutus did, and then confronted his fate at Philippi unappalled by the ominous spectre of his evil genius.*

If hallucinations are engendered now in the way just described we may be sure that it was so in times past, when their real nature, so far from being known in the least, was not even suspected. It was natural then, nay, inevitable, to think them spiritual or supernatural apparitions. What other interpretation could be given of them? In the nature of things, too, they could not fail to occur more easily to savage and barbarous minds, less amply stored with faculties, and these loosely federate, just as they occur more readily in young children than in adults; and, occurring, they would be more sure to compel belief, seeing that there was no store of natural knowledge to sit in judgment upon them, much less to give a natural explanation of them. The brain-centres being more complex and more finely and firmly knit in civilized persons, consolidate with the stable organization of more numerous and true relations with external nature, there is less facility for a part to let itself go out of relations with other parts into illusive activity and its accompanying vividness of presentation. Moreover, another and allied result of the more complex and compact mental fabric is the strong, silent inhibition of childish imaginations of the natural and the supernatural; wild flights of the puerile kind are impossible from the solid basis

* Not unjustly describable, perhaps, as the foremost and foolishest assassin of all time; not because of any remarkable greatness of his own character—for was he not a most unconscionable usurer who charged forty per cent. interest for his loans, and used the Roman soldiery to enforce payment?—nor of any special merit in the particular business of that murder, but because he struck down at a most critical time "the foremost man of all the world"—foremost in an empire which embraced the whole then known world nearly—in the mean interests of an aristocratic conspiracy, believing that his bootless crime was a great deed of patriotism. How inept the political judgment which accounted Cæsar the cause of the political condition which made Cæsar possible, and only Cæsar, perhaps, could have conducted to a good end!

of assimilated facts and relations, imagination is imbued with the sober spirit of a large capitalized experience.

No more nowadays does the awed rustic hurry past the churchyard at night with palpitating heart, for the ghost is not seen there as once it was, because it is not believed in as once it was. The idea, if it arise, is faint and formless—too weak to attain by intensification the vivid energy to become an image, either of itself or with the help of a friendly moonbeam; it lacks the adequate basis of emotional belief. Instantly and unconsciously controlled by a silent process of inhibition, owing to the positive knowledge incorporate in the structure of a well-balanced and fairly cultured brain, it stirs no emotional agitation there; for the accumulations of natural knowledge which constitute the mental fabric of the modern disbelief in ghosts signify definitely organized cerebral tracks that exert a silent, steady inhibition effectively to prevent or restrain the uprising idea. The vulgar mind—and every mind was once vulgar in this respect—is always prone to accept the unknown for the possible (*omne ignotum pro possibili*), because it is destitute of the knowledge necessary to instruct it concerning what is possible and what is not; it is natural for it, with its strong propensity to the wonderful, to believe what it would not be natural for anybody to believe who has wider and deeper knowledge of what is, and what is possible, in the order of things: as the region of the positively known increases, the region of the possible and the wonderful decreases. It is natural also for those who cannot or will not learn what is known, to go on believing, because they have not knowledge, just as their forefathers did before knowledge was.

As the belief in ghosts and other spiritual apparitions has prevailed amongst peoples in all times and places, and still lingers among savages, it must have its deep foundations either in the facts of nature or in the constitution of human nature. The scientific enquirer is bound either to account for the apparitions as coinages of brain such as "esctasy is very cunning in," or to frankly acknowledge them to be indubitable instances of spiritual beings taking human or other shapes (for dogs and other animals have frequently thus

appeared) and becoming visible to men. The little room which they have now in human thought in comparison with the large space which they once filled, and the rareness and fineness of them now in comparison with their frequency and crudeness in the past, show that the tendency of modern enquiry and thought is to thin and subtilize them into extinction.

In this connection it is right to note that the visions seen in different times and places have been in keeping with the ideas or beliefs of the age and people. The apparitions of barbarous differ from those of savage peoples, and those of cultured from those of barbarous peoples: they change in character with the changing phases of intellectual development. Visions of Satan were common in the Middle Ages, but they seldom or never occur now. Luther's notions of the devil's personality and doings were very much on a par with those of a Saxon peasant of his time, he having no doubt whatever that witches frequently had carnal intercourse with their familiar devils;* he was not surprised, therefore, to see the devil come into his cell and proceed to make a great noise behind the stove, or to hear him walking in the cloister above his cell at night. But is there an instance on record of ancient Greek or Roman seeing the devil? Or did ever ancient Greek or Roman, by private bargain, sell his soul to him for earthly pleasure and prosperity, as so many persons suffered death for doing in the Middle Ages? The Satan whom Luther rudely assaulted by flinging an inkstand at his head had not then been invented; the notion of him not existing, hallucination did not take his shape.

When Christianity spread among the heathen their dethroned pagan gods were banished to lonely places and dreary caverns in the forests and on the hills, stigmatized as evil spirits, and declared to be the workers of the calamities,

* So also Sir Thomas Browne. "For my part I have ever believed and do now know that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort not of infidels, but Atheists. . . . I could believe that spirits use with men the act of carnality; and that in both sexes. I conceive they may assume, steal, or contrive a body wherein there may be action enough to content decrepit lust or passion to satisfy more active veneries."—*Rel. Med.*

sicknesses, and other ills which men suffered; for the new gods of the triumphant faith degraded the vanquished gods of the old faith into devils, as the conquering nations made slaves of the conquered. Thus the discrowned gods were odiously discredited by the priests of the new faith; and when a few of their belated worshippers, cleaving to the old beliefs or relapsing into them, met together by night in lonely places for secret sacrifices, they were accused of practising witchcraft with their familiar spirits, and, by their evil help, of raising storms, destroying cattle, causing wasting diseases, and doing like malignant mischief. Their heresy was branded with an anti-social stigma and punished as a crime against the social order. It is hard to say whether Satan exists still, a last survival of these dethroned gods, so vague, inconsistent, and obscure is the language used by those who talk and write about him; but if he survive, it is certainly as the dim image of his old self, having the shadow only of his former power and state.*

What would a Roman cardinal, could he dare to think sincerely and to speak sincerely what he thinks, say now of the Bull of Innocent VIII. sanctioning and stimulating the torture and burning of witches? Or a Protestant archbishop think of Luther's opinion that the devil was the cause of devastating storms and other calamities; that blind, lame, dumb persons and idiots were persons in whom devils had established themselves; that physicians who tried to cure their infirmities as if they proceeded from natural causes were ignorant blockheads who knew nothing of the power of the devil? Barbarous nations everywhere still hold much the same opinions; knowing that they suffer injury and death at the hands of their fellows, they conclude that sickness and

* He survives in one, and that at all times the most effective, mode of him—viz., in man's devilish behaviour to man: *Homo homini dæmon*, that is, "Man's devil is man." If Satan be extinct the difficulty will be to reverence the Power which then does his work; for all the wickedness on earth which made him necessary will still remain and require a principle of evil to do it: a principle which must be allowed to have held its own hitherto in the system of things. The generalization of a moral agency having the good qualities of man entails logically his generalization of an immoral agency having his bad qualities.

death are caused by the secret sorcery or other evil doing of one of their kind who works invisibly. To them, entirely ignorant of its natural causes, it is impossible to think of disease in any other light than as the work of some malevolent demon or spirit; just as theologians of the present day who know nothing of nervous functions think of a nervous ecstasy in a spiritually minded hysteric as the effect and means of a supernatural inspiration.* The South African who believes in a god with a crooked leg sees him in dreams and visions with a crooked leg.† In the main, the hallucinations of an epoch reflect its dominant feelings and ideas.

So much for the two principal modes of origin of hallucinations—that is to say, either primarily in the senses or their sensory and associated motor tracts, or primarily in the higher centres of thought. The division is a necessary one, because the distinction is evident between hallucinations that are in manifest relation with the thoughts, therefore of more specially mental origin and nurture, and hallucinations that are not in manifest relation with the thoughts, being of sensory and, so to speak, more bodily origin and nurture. What can be of more plainly sensory origin than the hallucinations of *delirium tremens* and other forms of alcoholism, in which rats or mice are seen running over the bedclothes, serpents gliding along the floor, bats flying about the room, toads squatting on the wall.‡ On the other hand, what can more clearly show

* See note at end of Part II. (p. 237). "Like the Australians, the Timorese cannot understand why any one should ever die unless he be killed; so they attribute both sickness and natural death to the influence of some malevolent existence, which they believe eats up the spirit of the blighted person after death. As soon, therefore, as the sick person has died the *swangi* (or person in whom the evil spirit has taken up its residence, and who is considered to be in collusion with it), whom their fanaticism easily discovers, used with his whole family to be seized—till it was made a capital crime by the Portuguese so to do—bound hand and foot, and either impaled or buried alive, and their goods confiscated for the benefit of the accusers and the lord of the soil."—*A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, p. 438. By H. O. FORBES.

† TYLOR'S *Primitive Culture*, i. 306. He quotes from Livingstone.

‡ Or the hallucinations which sometimes go before and herald an attack of apoplexy, when there seems to be a continual ringing of bells in his ears, or bad smells persistently afflict the sufferer.

the part taken by thought in the origin and nurture of hallucinations than the story told by Baillarger* of the woman who believed herself to be condemned to prison, and was continually hearing the voice of the prefect of police threatening her? One day she was in great spirits because she had beaten the imagined prefect at the experiment of guessing odd or even: she had taken at hazard some pieces of money out of her pocket, waiting for the voice to say "odd" or "even"; and as soon as she heard it distinctly had counted the coins and found it was wrong. Many times before she had tried the experiment and the voice had always been right, for on all these previous occasions she had known the number of the pieces of money, whereas on the last occasion she was ignorant herself whether the number was odd or even.

However, notwithstanding the needful distinction, it is certain that the origin of hallucinations is most often mixed, and their nature always so when their true character is not appreciated by the subject; sense and thought combining to produce the effect and it being impossible to say which is first and most at fault. Nor could it well be otherwise, seeing how intimate and essential is the connection between the respective nerve-centres of thought and sense, whereby they act together in co-ordination and unity of function.

One consideration more in this connection: that in most cases in which an idea of the thought-centres becomes hallucination compelling belief, and in most cases in which hallucination originating in sense overrules reason, there is discoverable, when adequate enquiry is made (I exclude the case of gross cerebral disease), a natural or acquired infirmity of nervous constitution, a flaw or frailty tending to what it ends in.

There is this more to be said of the hallucination which is in vital relation with the thought—namely, that, although the hallucination is a phantom, the thought may none the less be valid, the hallucination being a sort of incidental dross thrown off by its glowing heat. When it is gravely considered how great a part hallucinations have played at critical periods of

* In his well-known and excellent essay, *Des Hallucinations*. Mem. de l'Acad. de Médecine, 1846.

human history, being regarded as divine visions and infusing the conviction of supernatural countenance and help in the work done, the cynic might triumph, and the believer in the hopes of his kind despair, were it necessary to believe that human progress ever rested entirely on so rotten a basis. But if a person has been fired by a fervent faith and, so inspired, has done epoch-making work in the world, what matters it that he had a helpful hallucination? The primary and real force in the work was not the hallucination, that was adjunct only, it was the antecedent or concomitant heat of feeling and faith; and the work done, whether good or bad, was none the less real because it had not the particular supernatural sign or seal claimed for it. Had Mahomet never seen the angel Gabriel it is probable that the great mission of overthrowing idolatry and polytheism, and of welding scattered tribes into a powerful nation, would have been accomplished by him or by some other prophet who, formulating in thought the brooding *nisus* of the time and fusing energies into compact unity of aim by glowing feeling, would have risen up to do what the world had then at heart. And had any one else, not having Mahomet's faith and faculty, and not, like him, prepared by long hours of lonely meditation and wrestling agonies of thought and feeling to take up the mighty work, seen the angel Gabriel or any number of angels any number of times, he would not have accomplished it. It was a work of destined natural development, a new birth of time preordained in the human course thereof, which, never having been till then, might well seem more than natural to those who knew only what was and had been, and to need therefore a supernatural inspiration. Thereupon the chosen and nature-inspired organ of the new impulse, believing in a direct government of the world by God and in himself as the instrument of the divine purpose, might regard the inspiration which thrilled him as the word or voice of God in him. And from that conviction how short and easy the step to attribute external reality to it, whether visible appearance or articulate voice! The unknown power beyond the reach of thought, be it what it may, named or unnameable, was there and then articulate in him for good or evil. If God inspire the thought and feeling, and they

beget the hallucination, which aids the individual to do what he is ordained to do, is it not then a special means divinely provided for the end? * Little as men like the notion, it has, perhaps, been so willed in the mysterious counsels of creation that their best work in the world is done under illusion. What matters it in the end whether the illusion of an hour or of an age?

The thoughts of men are so governed by words that there is no little danger, once a thing has been named, lest they cease thereafter to think what it is. They accept the traditional view of what it is; neglect to examine what it is really; are dominated by names which have often got by use such associations as to have quite a different meaning from that which they had originally. Thus it has been that, having classed a phenomenon as madness, they have been prone to put it aside as if all had been said about it that need be said. In reality it were a proper enquiry to make whether a certain kind of madness is not the most fit instrument to do a particular work in the world at a particular time and place; whether the work would have got itself done at all, then or ever, but for the lead and force of that inspired rashness—without a certain divine impetuosity, as it were. So great is the influence of tradition, custom, habit, and conformity, which, enveloping and informing the mental being, presses like an atmosphere unconsciously on every thought and feeling, that the vast multitude of persons cannot even conceive the notion of deviation; and the majority of the small remnant who can be other-minded dare not, nor can so much as feel a wish to, rebel against the established rule. What an originality is needed in any one for so small a thing as to dress out of the fashion or to eat out of fashion! And what courage he must display in facing the questioning surprise, the silent disapproval, or the open ridicule

* Another instance is seen in the great work done by Joan of Arc, the famous maid of Orleans, when she, a peasant girl of eighteen years of age, led the armies of France to the victories by which it was freed from English rule, inspired to her mission by the vision which she saw, and the commands which she heard, of St. Michael. Without doubt it was hallucination which she had in her rapture, an offset of the ecstasy of religious and patriotic feeling in which her whole nature was absorbed. Nevertheless the feeling and aim were not hallucination, nor was the mighty work which came of it.

and remonstrance of all those who, because of his difference from them, regard him as eccentric or lunatic! All the while that which is the height of eccentricity in one country is natural and customary in another.

How inestimable, then, the service sometimes rendered to mankind by the few who can think and, thinking, do differently from the herd!* A well-balanced brain, adjusted fitly by every facet of it to every aspect of its surroundings, so far as these are known, is plainly not an engine to break up the medium and to make new surroundings, evolutional or revolutional; the required brain for that purpose is one which, not being in stable repose of faculties and circumstances, but unstable, with a preponderating tension in one direction, is instigated by an unrest, divine or demonic, urging it to discharge itself in the disruption of the old medium. It is the fit instrument provided by nature, where its productive energies are not effete, to prevent stagnation, and not provided when they are effete.

Happily the force of originality needed to break through traditional routine of thought, feeling, and conduct, and to give freedom of expansion to impulses of variation, is not, after all, commonly so great as it seems and is deemed to be; the barrier looks more formidable than it actually proves to be when it is put to the test, most part of it being convention and custom with the life gone out of it; wherefore a bold attack quickly discloses its weakness. Nothing is more certain than that things seemingly beyond hope are oftentimes achieved easily by being boldly ventured; and it is an ever-recurring wonder, though the wonder is that it is a wonder, when presumptuous ignorance, not held back by diffidence or reflection, succeeds better in life by sheer force of pushing audacity than modest wisdom does by merit or by taking thought.

* A truth which Prince Henry appeared to appreciate when he sarcastically complimented Poins thus: "Thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks: never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine." (*Second Part Henry IV.*, act ii., scene ii.) A truth exemplified in far more illustrious fashion by the life of Him to whom the Pharisees said: "Master, we know that Thou art true and carest for no man." (Mark xii. 14.) Not even for the divine voice of 'public opinion'!

The real difficulty in putting forth a new principle is to disregard meditative doubts and paralyzing fears, to dare the revolt in the beginning; for if the principle has vitality it initiates a stream of change which draws to itself a succession of reinforcing affluents and flows with steadily gathering force. It is to make the initial start that a mind emancipated though it be by natural defects of constitution from the customary inhibitions of thought and feeling has its special and excellent uses.

The foregoing considerations respecting the origin and nature of visions and hallucinations make it plain that phenomena really morbid have uniformly been mistaken for supernatural appearances all the world over: so much lies beyond dispute. Furthermore, it is indisputable that temperaments prone naturally to lapse into morbid action have been purposely selected, and means suited to induce morbid action of them systematically used, in order to obtain the visions. But to leap forthwith from that conclusion to the unqualified assertion that all visions of the supernatural everywhere have had a like pathological origin and no higher origin, is to make a generalization which many will vehemently repudiate. Every creed is prompt to protest that there are essential differences between the hallucinations of mental disorder and the authentic visions of its inspired seership. Who, then, will expound the differential characters?

The followers of a particular religion cannot do otherwise than repudiate the divine authority of the supernatural events of other religions, rejecting rival visions, not because of any evidence of genuineness or falsity discoverable in the features of the visions themselves, but because every creed must begin by tacitly begging the whole question in its favour. For to start with the implicit postulate that its revelation is the true one is to guarantee beforehand the truth of the supernatural visions which occur under its auspices. Thus the vision's truth rests entirely upon the truth of the revelation, albeit the fact does not hinder the vision from being quoted in turn as proof of the revelation; the proving and the proved going to work reciprocally to hold one another up. The vital question really is, whether any vision bears a supernatural

superscription on its face, and if so, what the superscription is and who is the infallible to read its infallible testimony.

Those who have investigated the nature and varieties of morbid hallucinations on the one hand, and on the other hand have closely studied the elaborate descriptions of their supernatural experiences by canonized saints who hold high places in the sacred calendar, have not been able to discover differential features. For example, taking hallucinations of hearing, which are most common hallucinations among the insane, and comparing them with the divine voices or *locutions*, which are the least suspicious of the supernatural experiences that so many saints of ecclesiastical history testify to having had, it clearly appears that there is not a single feature in the one which has not its counterpart in the other. No doubt the divine locutions were often intellectual only, the words, though duly formed, being heard internally, as it were, as if they were somehow inspired into the understanding, not spoken actually to the ears; but that is not a mark of distinction, since it is equally true of many morbid hallucinations. The insane person does not always hear the voices as distinct articulate utterances from without; he is careful sometimes, when questioned about them, to explain that they are in his head—interior voices, thoughts which he hears within, rather than words actually heard with his ears from without. Whether, however, they be heard as external utterances or as internal communications, they are distinctly apprehended and clearly understood, even when they come to him, as sometimes they seem to do, mysteriously from great distances; they oblige him to listen, answer his thoughts before he himself conceives them, comment upon his conduct, instigate him perhaps to words or deeds that are odious to him, vex and embarrass him continually, and in the worst event drive him to despair and suicide, because of his inability to escape from their importunities or of the fear that he may obey their injunctions. They want none of the characters which pious experts discover in their divine locutions.

It is difficult for the individual not to think of voices of the kind as in some sort supernatural, when he feels the ideas which they suggest or express to be contrary to the tenor of

his true thoughts and feeling; to be forced into his mind against his will and by no known law of association; to play their repugnant parts there without consciousness on his part of the smallest co-operation in their doings; and yet to appeal to him more distinctly and to possess him more intimately than ideas which he is conscious of having formed himself. Practically, he feels himself to be a divided, as he is a distracted, self; one part of him being possessed by a mysterious power which subtracts it from his real self, dominates it, and thrusts its promptings into the mental operations with the perversity and persistence of a malignant demon in possession of him: perhaps it is the devil himself whom he accuses of working on his spirit to suggest wicked thoughts and feelings. What matters it that all the world differs from him, and that everybody he meets, learned or unlearned, is ready to assure him that no external agency can possibly do that which he thinks is done to him, when the subjective reality of the experience is so vivid, so mysterious, so overpowering? Under the paralyzing intensity of its coercive sway the very impossibility of a natural explanation becomes a reason for impotent belief in that which subverts all the principles of the rational understanding.

I have before pointed out how prone a mind is to bewildering apprehension and preposterous belief, when so overwhelmed with the external vastness and vagueness of things as not to be able to settle itself in definite notional apprehensions: here is to be noted a similar state of things produced by internal causes—by a mysterious experience-shattering and overwhelming condition of mind entailing a like reeling inability of it to fix itself in definite notional apprehensions. The actual experience is, of course, strictly internal in both cases; it matters not, therefore, as regards the disabling feeling, in its character of result, whether its cause be mainly within or mainly without; the mental bewilderment is much the same, however produced, and seeks refuge and, so to speak, solution of itself in similar supernatural causes. Having suffered a disruption of normal unity, the brain-functions settle into the equilibrium of a final morbid unity.

If one refers to the experience of St. Theresa, who justly

holds the foremost place as an authority concerning the nature of divine locutions, it appears that, although she lays down rules by which to distinguish between them and mere ideas of the understanding, not one of the rules serves to distinguish them from hallucinations. It is no mark of distinction that in divine locutions, as she says, the words are very distinctly formed, but not heard by the bodily ear; that they are much more clearly understood than they would be if so heard. Nor is it a mark of distinction that there is no escape from them; that it is not in the person's power to turn away his attention from them, as it is with locutions of his own mind; that he must listen whether he desires it or not. That they come with singular authority when not desired and when the understanding is occupied with other things, and that they may not come when desired, whereas the locutions of the understanding come whenever we like—these, again, are not extraordinary characters, but characters which they have in common with ordinary hallucinations. Lastly, it is impossible to discover a discriminating quality in the fact that "these locutions proceed occasionally in such great majesty that, without our recollecting who it is that utters them, they make us tremble if they be words of reproof, and die of love if words of love. They are also matters of which the memory has not the least recollection; and expressions so full are uttered so rapidly that much time must have been spent in arranging them if we formed them ourselves." *

If there be no objective mark in the supernatural communication itself to distinguish it from hallucination, it is certainly not possible to accept the individual's intimate certitude as guarantee of its divine nature. To do that would be to admit the authenticity of every supernatural experience of the kind which any one in any country has ever believed himself to have; nor would it be possible to stop there, seeing that every madman labouring under morbid hallucination might claim a similar authority for his intense assurance. The latter we know to be deceived; the former we may justly suppose

* *The Prophetic Spirit in Relation to Wit and Madness*, p. 187, by the Rev. A. CLISSOLD, M.A. He quotes fully from *The Life of St. Theresa, written by Herself*, translated from the Spanish by David Lewis.

equally likely to be deceived, and far more likely, because more tempted by subtle interests, to deceive. To place any faith in testimony liable to two such powerful causes of fallacy, when it conflicted with the unfailing experience of all men of good sense with regard to a regular order of nature, would be a subversion of the principles of reasoning on which knowledge is based. Not one of the contending religions exacts interruptions of the regular course of nature on behalf of other religions or of mankind generally; the demand is only for its private behoof. This is the true revelation because it is mine is an idolatry of the *teste meipso* which, however satisfactory to self, cannot be expected to satisfy other selves.

The objection that a direct communication from the Deity would be a violation of the laws of nature is not answered by the old and stale argument that the divine locution might take place in conformity with a higher law than the known laws of nature, being a temporary discontinuity, not a violation of them—a special supersession only of their function for the occasion. To a being who lives in nature, and must live by knowledge of it, the supernatural has no pertinence since it is not natural. The occurrence of a supernatural event in direct opposition to its known natural order would be nothing else but the temporary abolition of the known properties and relations of things and the utter confounding of human experience—of that same experience which alone is our authority for believing human testimony; not the mere interruption or suspension of known law, but the negation of all law based upon the uniformity of experience within its range.* The very basis of natural knowledge would be destroyed; no belief could ever have the certitude that it was in conformity with

* Southey, for example, in his *Life of Wesley* argues, as others have done since, that an event may be preternatural, though not miraculous—may not be in the ordinary course of nature and yet imply no alteration of its laws. That is to pay with words, which, if defined, would yield no payment at all. For what are laws of nature but the most general statements or formulas of observation of its course; and how can an event occur out of that course, in it and within observation, without being a violation of those formulas or laws? The question is not, be it noted, of events that may occur outside nature and observation. They may be as many as you please; but to us in that case occurrence and non-occurrence would be all one.

experience, no generalization ever be trusted, nor could an instant's confidence be felt as to what would come to pass from hour to hour; it would be no matter thenceforth how many miracles, big or little, happened, nor how often nor how seldom they happened: the universe would practically be a chaos, not a cosmos. If the law of gravitation may be suspended even for a second of time without the universe going to wreck, then it is clear that there is no law of gravitation at all; for the suspension of a second would serve as well as the suspension of a century.*

Were the arguments in support of supernatural communications worth anything, the communications themselves could not fail seriously to weaken them; so uncertain, confused, contradictory, and sometimes ridiculous are they. Moreover, they are invariably rejected by those who, not believing, need to be convinced, and invariably accepted by those who, believing, have no need to be convinced. Comparing, then, as Hume recommends, the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men with the instances of the violation of the laws of nature by supernatural visions and voices, in order to judge which of them is least extraordinary and most likely to happen, the veracity of the testimony in such case would be perhaps a more miraculous event than the event which it was adduced to establish.

* Considering the many recorded miracles, and many mighty miracles not recorded, done by Jesus of Nazareth in the three years of His active career, it is strange to think how the universe could go on with so many suspensions of its laws in so short a period. But it is not worth while to try to think it, for in the rapid solution of old Christian belief the historical truth of the miracles is distrusted by many who profess to accept it, and openly rejected by many who reverence the great moral Teacher. No doubt the theologian will quote it as a triumph of religion over science when, having abandoned every position which science assaulted, he retains only principles of morality which existed before it and against which science has never had a word to say.

CHAPTER IV.

MANIA AND DELUSION.

HAVING said so much concerning hallucination, its interpretation and its misinterpretations, there is no need to say much concerning the features of more positive mental disorder. If a person has an insane hallucination and, believing it not insane, suffers it to rule his thoughts and conduct, it is evident that his reason shares in the disorder; for if reason were not overruled and deluded it might be expected to reason against it, if not to reason it away, and in any event to keep it sequestered in harmless isolation, as a sort of mental alien, instead of receiving it into its intimacy, naturalizing it there, and admitting it to full rights of mental citizenship.

It is not easy to conceive now that the incoherent ravings of madness were once thought to be the utterances of a god in possession of the man; yet so it was in olden times.* In the Hebrew and Greek languages the same words were used to denote the ravings of insanity and the often equally unintelligible ravings of the diviner or revealer of divine things; so that it became necessary, in the course of time, to distinguish the mania which was disease from the mania which was inspiration and proceeded from the gods or God. In both cases the individual was transported by a mysterious power into an extraordinary mental state in which he became the organ of strange utterances; only it was perceived soon in some cases that the state must be madness, whether devil-inflicted or not, because the thoughts, feelings, words, and conduct of the individual were thoroughly insensate and

* Οὐδεὶς ἔννους μαντεύεται, said Philo; *i.e.*, No one prophesies in his right mind

destructive of social order; while in the other cases, where the oracle was delivered in a more sober and coherent fashion, the notion of supernatural infusion preserved its credit for a long time, lost it slowly, has not yet lost it entirely.*

It was no valid objection to the ravings of the inspired person that to all outward seeming they were as unintelligible nonsense as the ravings of madness. That was their sacred seal and privilege, for the prophet or interpreter was the necessary complement of the oracle; his special function it was to find and expound the sense of the incoherent nonsense which the God-struck person—the theoleptic—poured out under divine compulsion: he was one who, like Daniel, "had understanding in all visions and dreams" and to whom they revealed their dark and sometimes awful meaning, as the mysterious writing on the wall revealed Belshazzar's doom to Daniel. To the one was given "divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues"; "for he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth." Greater, then, according to St. Paul, was he that prophesied (that is, expounded the dark sayings) than he who spake in tongues, since the Church received no edifying from the latter, except he were interpreted.† Moreover, the confusion was sure to be so great, if many were assembled and all spake with tongues, that unbelievers would certainly believe appearances and say they were mad. Therefore it was meet that not more than two, or at most three, should speak in tongues—and that not together, but in turn—and that one should interpret. In

* They were driven to distinguish alienation *of* reason, where the reason was disordered, from alienation *from* reason, where the reason was suspended and the individual spoke and acted in obedience to irresistible power. See CLISSOLD, *op. cit.*, p. 163. The mad things done and said by the latter were in no way the result of his reason, and therefore he was not mad. If a man make supernatural claims among a people who see nothing extraordinary in such claims, not regarding them as hallucinations and madness, he is practically not mad then and there, although he might be very mad if he made them here and now.

† The meaning of the word "prophet" was not then, as now, one who predicted events to come, but one who interpreted and expounded mysterious ravings, dark oracles, unknown tongues, and the like unintelligible utterances of the God-possessed person.

the delirious utterance itself there was nothing whatever by which ordinary people could distinguish it from actual delirium, which it exactly resembled; the privileged interpreter was required to reveal its occult and holy meaning. Meanwhile the central difficulty was only moved, not removed; for no provision was made to guarantee the veracity, competence, and infallibility of the interpreter.

Such was the state of belief at one time. But there was another reason besides a superstitious belief in the divine inspiration of raving nonsense for the opinion that prophets were transported out of themselves by supernatural influx to say what they could not have said out of their own natural resources: that was the impressive spectacle of the extraordinary spontaneity and brilliant flow of ideas exhibited by a mind in the inflamed state of activity which is often prelusive of actual delirium or mania; for there is then a singular upsurging into consciousness of the latent possessions of experience, so that the elated person, enchanted with the revelation of unsuspected wealth of thought and feeling, exults in a rapid rush of ideas, a vividness of memory, a freshness of feeling, a fertility of associations and combinations of ideas, and a facility of expression that seem to him almost miraculous. All the subtile, silent, and complex inter-inhibitions that weigh usually upon mortal faculties seem to be lifted as if by some immortal magic, and they revel in the intoxicated sense of an uncontrolled and unexampled freedom of function.

A good illustration of this inflamed state of mind, happily called by him a state of mental ignition, has been furnished by Mr. Ruskin's description of his experience of a mental illness to which he succumbed in consequence of overwork, as his physicians thought. He, however, was able, he believed, to appreciate the state of things much better than they did and to distinguish what was definitely diseased in the brain-action from what was simply curative—had there been time enough—of the wounded nature in him.

"Namely, first, the precise and sharp distinction between the state of morbid inflammation of brain which gave rise to false visions, and the not morbid, however dangerous, states of more or less excited temper, and

too much quickened thought, which gradually led up to the illness, accelerating in action during the eight or ten days preceding the actual giving-way of the brain; and yet, up to the transitional moment of the first hallucination, entirely healthy, and, in the full sense of the word, 'sane'; just as the natural inflammation about a healing wound in flesh is sane up to the transitional edge where its mass passes at a crisis into morbific, or even mortified, substance."

This more or less inflamed, yet still perfectly healthy, condition of mind, as he miscalls it, he found to be "a great additional force, enabling me to discern more clearly, and say more vividly, what for long years it had been in my heart to say." Such the ineffable joy of delivery!* Then he goes on to try to show that his writings and sayings and doings during this state had more method and consistency in their seeming incoherence than people thought, and were not so wanting in truth and soberness as they looked on the face of them; albeit admitting that some things had been said imprudently, and even incontinently, because he could not at the moment hold his tongue about what vexed or interested him, or returned soothingly to his memory. Repudiating the medical opinion that he went mad from overwork, he says, "I went mad because nothing came of my work." The enduring calamity of not getting anybody to believe in what he wrote was the humiliation which wrecked his mind for a time; that was the "wound from which came the mental ignition or irritation which would have been curative had there been time."† But is it not mad conceit when the hurt of self-love causes madness?

The distinction between the two states of premaniacal brilliancy and of positive maniacal disorder is not unknown to physicians, as Mr. Ruskin might easily have discovered had he been at the pains to refer to any medical treatise giving a description of the premonitory symptoms of an attack of mania; but the significance of the mental ignition of the first

* "If in this world there is one misery having no relief it is the pressure on the heart from the *Incommunicable*. And if another sphinx should arise to propose another enigma to man, saying, 'What burden is that which only is insupportable by human fortitude?' I should answer at once, '*It is the burden of the Incommunicable.*'"—DE QUINCEY, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.

† *Fors Clavigera*, Second Series: "Letter the Fourth."

stage, so well described by him, is not interpreted by them as he interpreted it in his case. The state is neither sane nor salutary, no more than inflammation is as sane or salutary as he ignorantly supposed. Always the best healing of a wound takes place without inflammation—by what Hunter called "first intention"; and the great aim of surgical treatment, and its eminent success at the present day, is, by excluding causes of irritation, to get healing without inflammation, or, if that cannot be done entirely, with the least inflammation possible; for the inflammation is not helpful and welcome, but hurtful and unwelcome, to quick and sound healing, being the exponent and effect of damaged structure and incontinent function—of lowered life; a stage of the descent towards, and a less degree of, that which Mr. Ruskin calls "morbific, or even mortified, substance," and only welcome as falling short of the worst stage.

So likewise it is with the premonitory state of mental ignition: he whose mind is thus on fire, happy though he be in the glowing consciousness of extraordinarily clear insight, of brilliant flashes of thought, of exalted powers of expression, is nowise so sane and sensible as he imagines; one thing he lacks pretty completely—namely, sound appreciation and solid judgment; and one thing he cannot do—namely, hold himself in and hold his tongue. He cannot truly apprehend other things and selves in just relations to himself and in their just proportions; full of self and incontinent of thought, feeling, and speech, he runs over in the exuberant expression of it, his keen self-love reacting in such high delirious strain against its previous humiliations, real or imagined; and the estimate which he forms of the value of what he then thinks and says, vividly exaggerated as it is by the intensity of personal feeling and the suspension of the proper qualifying inhibitions, is something of the same kind as that of the dreamer who is delighted with his power to compose brilliant poetry or prose, which he perhaps discovers, if a line or two remain in his memory on waking, to be not even brilliant nonsense. The prudent aim of a wise physician who was summoned to advise in such case, mindful that fever of mind is no more healthy than fever of body, would be to

abate the mental ignition by enjoining rest and quiet of mind in order to get sane and sober thought, just as his aim would be to subdue inflammation in order to get the wound healed.*

This intermediate state of mental exaltation between sober thought and actual raving, with its corresponding heat of feeling and conduct, when it was manifest as a sort of prophetic fury, would naturally produce different effects on different minds—on the minds of believers the opinion of supernatural inspiration, and on the minds of unbelievers the opinion of madness. It is certain that Paul's discourse and manner before Festus, when he recounted the strange story of his vision on the way to Damascus and of his consequent conversion from persecutor to disciple, looked like madness, for Festus could not help exclaiming, as he listened to him, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."† Although Paul earnestly denied the imputation on that occasion, yet it was an imputation which his words on another occasion prove that he knew was current against him; for to the Corinthians he writes that if he is beside himself it is in doing God's work; so that they had reason to glory in him either way—"For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause."‡ Holiness or madness, that is, according to the standpoint of sympathy or antipathy from which the enthusiasm was viewed by the mental medium; for if all people had the same errors or delusions, however extreme, nobody would be thought mistaken or mad.§

* In the succeeding letter of *Fors Clavigera* to that in which he describes his illness and sets forth his theory of it, Mr. Ruskin informs the workmen of England that the essential difference between him and other political writers is "that I never say a word about a single thing that I don't know; while they never trouble themselves to know a single thing they talk about." It is right to say that this criticism was written in 1885. Mr. Ruskin had made himself a subject for clinical commentary by a full exposition, in *Fors Clavigera*, of the details of his life and illness.

† Acts xxvi. 24. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 3.

§ Even Christ was accused by His enemies, and suspected by His friends, of being mad, when He was drawing the multitude around Him by His acts; for "when His friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself." (Mark iii. 21.) So again, with regard to His teaching,

A feature in Mr. Ruskin's case, as described by himself, has its special instruction—namely, his deep reluctance to acknowledge sincerely the madness of what he thought and did, and his desire to make out his conduct to have been more consistent and reasonable than it looked to others. Now, this is a circumstance not uncommon after mental illness—very notable after some forms thereof—especially after that intrinsic derangement which grows stealthily as a pathological development of character and is much a growth of self-love or egoism, as distinguished from the extrinsic insanity, so to speak, which, not native to the character, befalls the person accidentally as a foreign invader. The persistence of a positive morbid hallucination or delusion after all the other delirious symptoms of the malady have gone, which is noticed in some cases of otherwise apparently pretty complete mental recovery, is a more striking example of the same tendency. Such are the natural infirmities of human nature that it is hard for wounded self-love to accept sincerely the humiliation of its entire overthrow; it strains instinctively to find redeeming excuses and explanations, or takes obstinate refuge in some entrenchment of the ruins from which it refuses to be dislodged by evidence and argument.

It is the form of delusion which is the climax of a morbid development of character, an intrinsic evolution of the individual's nature rather than an extrinsic accident to it, that is of special interest in relation to the present enquiry: the delirium of mental deformity as the outcome of a distorted growth of mind, rather than such disorder of mind as is actually disease. Naturally, therefore, the difficulty is sometimes to say whether it is madness or not that we are confronted with.

There are two types of insane delusions, of quite contrary nature, characterizing the two leading classes of mental disorder, and corresponding to the two ordinary moods of depression and exaltation to which every mind is liable. In

when a division arose among the Jews because of His words, "Many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him? Others said, These are not the words of one that hath a devil." (John x. 20, 21.)

the one case, the afflicted person is in a state of abject fear and misery, full of vague apprehensions of evil to come, incapable of heart in his affairs or of hope of them, apathetic, inert, despairing, and sure that he is, or is about to be, overwhelmed by some unspeakable calamity—perhaps it is that he is forsaken by God and given over to eternal damnation: this is, so to speak, the delirious climax of a natural mood of melancholy. In the other case, we are confronted with one who, excessively elated and self-confident, is buoyant and busy, making light of difficulties, despising apprehensions, eager to plan and bold to execute the projects which he is prolific in forming, and who, perhaps, growing in presumption as his mind grows more and more inflamed, in the end rises to the conviction that he is one of the great personages of the world:* this is, so to speak, the delirious climax of a natural mood of elated feeling and sanguine thought.

Notably there is a contrast of the same kind between the constitutions of different minds, which, according to their respective tempers, are predisposed naturally to see things in dark and despairing, or in bright and hopeful, light: the gloomy and melancholy disposition easily prone to fears and apprehensions, and the bold and sanguine disposition as naturally prone to confident and hopeful views.

It is interesting to notice how these two contrary dispositions have given rise to two contrary forms of religious superstition. The gloomy and apprehensive mind, dreading all sorts of unknown evils from unknown agents, has had recourse to propitiations, ceremonies, sacrifices, and prayers, in order to placate the invisible powers whom it feared; has implored and purchased the mediating help of those who pretended to direct converse and influence with them, and the interest of whose craft it was to magnify its terrors; and in its terrified credulity has been the easy victim of designing knavery. Here is a common and abiding, as it was probably

* He who passionately believes himself to be wiser and better than all the world is very liable in the end to become the deluded monarch of a world of his own invention; more especially when he takes things in tragical earnest, and is entirely destitute of the saving power of looking at himself, in any degree, from the outside, and of gently satirizing himself, if need be, as an actor in the play who is not wholly its dupe. A sense of humour is a saving help in such case.

an original, source of vulgar superstition. The sanguine and confident mind, on the other hand, indulging high notions suited to its exalted mood and aspirations, and giving free flight to its imagination, grows to a great height of presumption, and finally, when stirred to the requisite glow of excitement, to transports and ecstasies which, being accompanied with a delirium of delight and quite beyond the reach of ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of the Deity, of whom the favoured individual thenceforth regards himself as the chosen oracle.* Such is the natural origin and growth of the enthusiastic fanatic who claims the authority of a direct divine inspiration, and, taking the lead in thought and action, commonly dominates and leads the anxious and self-distrusting temperament.

In both cases we have to do with the exaggerated and abnormal outcomes of natural states—with superstition and fanaticism as the morbid developments of different constitutional dispositions; and in the control and lead which fanaticism takes of superstition we have an example of the kind met with habitually in daily life, where the sanguine usually leads the distrustful temperament, and optimism in the long-run gets the better of pessimism. The propensity of human nature is always to run in one or other of these lines of superstition—either into an abject prostration, or into an ecstasy of conceit.

The melancholy form of delusion which characterizes one leading variety of insanity is not of special interest in the present connection. All the notice that I need take of it is to mark how frequently the imagination of a person overwhelmed with the vague and fearful feeling of indescribable misery flies to supernatural causes for an explanation. The delusion usually crystallized out of the woe-saturated feeling by the sufferer is that he has been given over to the dominion of Satan and to eternal damnation by an offended God, either because of the manifold sins and iniquities of his past life, or because he has committed the one terrible and unpardonable sin. Abjectly impotent to feel, think, and do, he imagines that he is under the spell of some terrible curse. His vague state of unintelligible fear exacts a vague, fearful,

* HUME's Essay *Of Superstition and Enthusiasm.*

unintelligible cause. The awful mystery of the unpardonable sin, because of its vague, vast, and shadowy nature, fascinates his imagination and holds it in a sort of cataleptic horror. Indeed, he may sometimes fall, and remain for months, in a trance-like state of stupor known technically as *melancholic stupor*, in which he is almost insensible to surrounding things. Formerly such a one was taken seriously at his word and believed to have received the assurance of damnation and the certitude of diabolic possession which he was convinced had been divinely given him; but he is now on all hands, when prayers have been found unavailing, relegated to medical care and treatment. His interest is no longer spiritual, it is psychological. But it is not so with the opposite form of exalted delusion, which still asserts its supernatural relations and maintains its spiritual credit. Its nature and operations, therefore, it will be interesting to consider.

To every one who reflects it is plain that a man must have a strong feeling of self in order to be a reformer. But it is the misfortune of the intense selfhood that, while it inspires the zeal and devotion essential to the successful reformer, it tends in almost equal degree to prevent a large and just estimate of things in their true proportions and a proper subordination of self. Hence that which is a good to the individual, by enabling him to proclaim and press new doctrine fearlessly in face of opposition, may become an evil by stimulating self-love and nurturing exaggerated or erroneous opinion into positive delusion. In itself no idea relating to external things is intense or strong, it is only clear or obscure, distinct or indistinct; that which imparts to it intensity or strength is feeling or passion, the sources of which are in the several organs of the body, reason being localized in the brain as controller, regulator, and guide; the passion proper to the occasion of a particular idea comes, therefore, from the affection of the whole self, and is pleasant or painful according as the affection is propitious or adverse to that self's native impulse to maintain and perfect its being. Now, a mental constitution so framed as to realize itself adequately in one direction only meets inevitably with frequent occasions of rebuff in other directions, and is thrown back with passionate

intensity on its one outlet of being; for which reason it is prone to grow in that line of growth out of all just proportion or *ratio*—to become, that is to say, irrational.*

The pathological process is the development of a character by the stealthy growth of an ill-fashioned and undisciplined self-hood into a deformity that is virtually an insanity of mind: at the outset the sincerity and zeal of an earnest but not well-balanced mind; then a gradual exaltation of self by the unwholesome stimulus of popular admiration and the flattery of success; an inevitably increasing craving for stronger stimulants to inflame the waning excitement; a growing exaggeration of pretensions, in part consciously but in greater part perhaps unconsciously, by subtile ways of self-flattery; finally, the loss of all sense of proportion and the development of an infatuated conceit of self. The sickly growth of selfhood in such persons is fostered by the forcing social atmosphere in which they live; for they forsake by degrees the wholesome company of their old friends, who, not agreeing with their pretensions, might check the growing self-delusion, and affect, by pathological affinity, the unwholesome company of like-minded admiring followers who feed it. This they do mainly because it is always more pleasant to increase, even if only pathologically, than to decrease, but partly also because the disbelief of friends, silent or express, stirs in their hearts lurking feelings of self-distrust which they are averse to face.

Considering impartially the case of Mahomet, it repugns reason that throughout his career he was only the clever

* If it be an aim to modify beneficially the development of such a temperament, that will not be done by opposing directly the main stream of its tendency and endeavouring to elicit entirely new tendencies. It can only be done indirectly by diverting the main stream into many separate channels, which, though they debouch at last in the same place or near it, reach their ends in circuitous ways, and so tend to consolidate the character by organizing various relations along their courses; for each direct relation thus made has its relations, and these, again, their relations, whereby the consolidating modifications spread through the whole mental fabric. The stream of tendency has its predestined issue, but meanwhile a character is consolidated around it. Plainly psychology can do nothing to direct and help education in any practical way, must remain a mere system of barren generalities and vague words for the practical teacher, until it becomes a positive and fruitful study of individual character—until, that is to say, it abandons empty abstractions and becomes *individual psychology*.

impostor who duped others without duping himself. Small indeed was his encouragement to begin the dangerous and difficult enterprise of his life, and almost unexampled the steadfast constancy of conviction and devotion needed to carry it through; for he had to face the anger and alienation of his friends and relatives, to give up an honourable place in his tribe, to hide as an outcast in caverns in order to save his life.

Mahomet was forty years old when the truth was first revealed to him, and in three years he had gained thirteen followers! Now, as it is certain that any one is immensely comforted and fortified in his conviction the moment another person shares it, seeing that he may then reasonably hope it is not mere madness—Mahomet's faith, when prone to falter and despair before universal disbelief, being sustained by the single supporting faith of his old wife, Kadijah—it is hard to believe that pure imposture had strength enough to bear triumphantly the stress which he endured. His was a venture which it was not likely to repay the ambition of imposture to begin, hardly within the forces of fraud to carry through.

But a vindication of Mahomet's sincerity must needs be at the expense of his sanity; for the allegations that he ascended into heaven, as he said he did, that he was visited by angels, and that he wrote down the Koran exactly as it was dictated to him supernaturally, are fables fit only for a mental nursery.

Having a new and great work to accomplish in the world, a new start of nature's development in its human domain, since he was entrusted with the message which nature yearned to be delivered of at that time and in that place; urged consequently by an impelling inspiration whose mysterious thrill might well seem supernatural; his imagination, working under its supreme strain, would lay hold of every help, genuine or fictitious, offered by the incidents of its glowing energy. He knew not himself how much he was impostor and how much saint;—what prophet ever did?—nature so mixing the proportions of good and bad in the composition of the prophet as to leave it uncertain

how far his work is due to the worst or best element in him.*

A signal instance of one who posed and was adored by disciples as an inspired prophet of God, is Emanuel Swedenborg, the founder of the Church of the New Jerusalem. The son of a somewhat mystical mother and a singularly self-complacent and self-sufficient father — a Swedish bishop, who always managed to persuade himself that his own worldly interests were entirely other-worldly and identical with the will of God, and who was sure he had cured disease miraculously by his prayers—Swedenborg inherited in his nature a serene and boundless self-sufficiency along with a strong mystical tendency. The first part of his life was devoted to the pursuit of science and philosophy, in both of which, labouring with diligence and industry, he put forth the most high-reaching speculations and schemes of inventions with great ingenuity and greater self-confidence; but these pursuits he abandoned wholly during the latter part of his life, when, as he believed, his eyes were opened to discern what passed in the world of spirits and he was chosen by God to unfold the spiritual sense of the Holy Scriptures.

It was in an extraordinary vision which he had when he was fifty-six years old that the being who appeared to him said, "I am God, the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer of the world. I have chosen thee to unfold the spiritual sense of the Holy Scriptures. I will Myself dictate to thee what thou

* The persons who perform leading parts in the great human drama seem, on the whole, to fall naturally into three principal classes:—1. Those who, believing seriously in its transcendent importance, take it in tragical earnest, and are ready to sacrifice strength and wealth and even life in its service: the mainly or wholly dupes. 2. Those who do not believe in it seriously at all, pretend only to take it in earnest, but are pleased and interested to play their parts in it as accomplished actors, and to make the most for themselves out of it in position, profit, and occupation: the mainly or wholly dupers. 3. The intermediate, mixed, and large class of persons, who, owing to the predominant note of self-love in their natures, are very much in earnest, and at the same time very successful in identifying the right with their feelings and wishes; whereby it does not fail often to happen that they sincerely persuade themselves that their motives justify the use of all means that gratify their wishes and—which for them is equivalent—further the righteous cause: they are the duped dupers; and, of course, they vary in characters according to the relative preponderance of the mixed elements in them, joining at their opposite poles classes 1 and 2.

shalt write." The visitation was the forerunner of an attack of acute mania—so overwhelming the pressure of supernatural influx upon the mental equilibrium of the natural man—which lasted for a few weeks; on recovery from which he was what he remained for the rest of his life—either, as his disciples think, a holy seer endowed with the faculty of conversing with spirits and angels in heaven and hell, and in whom the Lord Jesus Christ made His second coming for the institution of a new Church, described in the Revelation under the figure of the New Jerusalem; or, as those who are not disciples think, an interesting and harmless monomaniac, who, among many foolish sayings, said many wise and good things attesting the wreck of a mind of large original endowment, intellectual and moral. Such the momentous difference of opinion possible, in an age esteeming itself the most enlightened age of the world, between two human beings of equal capacity and understanding, each as eager as the other to know the truth and believe it!

It is not surprising that the disciples of Swedenborg resent indignantly the complacent assurance which scouts his revelations as hallucinations, yet accepts without question the like supernatural revelations of its own creed as authentic. In face of these conflicting certitudes of the rival followers of different seers, what can he do who looks for larger truth than is the private possession of any sect—what but sink into a Gallio-like attitude of sceptical indifference? There, meanwhile, he may safely stay in these certitudes—that illusive visions of the supernatural certainly occur, having features exactly resembling those of the genuine visions which it is not yet certain do occur; that the evidence of them, whether they be natural illusions or genuinely supernatural, rests alone, and can only rest, in each case on the personal consciousness and testimony of the individual who is the subject of them; that there is no criterion by which the false vision can be distinguished infallibly from the real one, either by the individual or by others, the standard of common experience not being in the nature of the case available. He will take due account also of the fact that hallucinations have been seen in all places and in all times; that everywhere and always they have been

thought to be visions of supernatural beings and events; and that the visions that have been unanimously supernatural in one age have been unanimously owned to be hallucinations in subsequent ages. If a constant experience warrants confident expectation in human things, a similar process of progressive disillusioning may be expected to go on in the future—at any rate, for a long time to come.

Were a man to believe and do in one age what another believed and did amidst the applause of his contemporaries in a former age, he would be esteemed and treated as mad. The religious ascetic of old fled from the society of his kind to the mountains or the desert, living there on the coarsest and scantiest food, and mortifying his body with fastings, stripes, and exposure to extreme heat or cold; all the while deeming himself, and being deemed by others, a saint of the first magnitude. That was the truth of him then, whereas the truth of him now is that he had nursed selfhood into deformity near akin to madness. Reading the stories by these holy fanatics of their temptations and tribulations, the ingenuous student might think that the devil was occupied entirely with them, his whole energies being required for the desperate encounters in which they engaged him; and it was naturally a great triumph of self-love for the saint to tell how completely he had foiled his arts and repelled his assaults. St. Athanasius relates that St. Anthony was whipped frequently by the devil, and St. Jerome says the same of St. Hilarius. Of Cornelia Juliana it is seriously related that, when a prodigious noise was heard in her room by the other nuns, it turned out that she was engaged in a conflict with the devil, whom, having thrown down, she trampled upon most unmercifully. The stories of the lives of the saints are replete with similar supernatural experiences of religious fanaticism. Nothing comes out more remarkably in such combats with Satan, as also in the Faust-like compacts made with him in the Middle Ages for their souls by those who, having got the benefit of the bargain for their lives, cheated him cleverly at the hour of death out of the price of it, than the fatuous weakness with which so strong and astute a person allowed himself to be worsted: a circumstance not greatly

to be wondered at, however, if the devil engaged in each case was the particular creation, the outward mental projection, of the individual saint, who, rapt in a delirium of holy self-love, naturally depicted him and his overthrow after the fashion of his desires.

Not less grotesque and silly than the stories of diabolic assaults were the extravagant things done by the saints who were strung to this tense strain of holiness. St. Francis, the founder of the Order of Franciscans, stripped himself naked in proof of his innocence; following therein the example of the Prophet Isaiah who stripped himself naked, and walked naked and barefoot for a time, under the influence of the prophetic spirit.* St. Macarius, having one day killed a gnat which had stung him, was seized with such compunction that, as an atonement, he threw his clothes away and remained naked for six months in a marsh, exposed to the bites of insects. The last thirty years of the life of St. Simeon, commonly called Stylites, were passed on the top of a column sixty feet high on a mountain some thirty or forty miles east of Antioch; there he performed his devotions, sometimes in an erect attitude, with his arms outstretched in the figure of a cross, but most often by repeated bendings of his body from the forehead to the feet, a curious spectator on one occasion counting as many as twelve hundred and forty-four repetitions, and then abandoning the count.† Such the lofty pedestal chosen for the display of humility! Such the solitude of spiritual seclusion sought in order to practise self-mortification! Such the full-fed vanity aping humility; all the more odious for that reason, as an ape looks the more deformed because it is the caricature of man.‡

* Isa. xx. 2. In like manner when the Spirit of God came upon Saul at Naioth, he stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night (1 Sam. xix. 24).

It would be a curious enquiry what the hidden affinity is between extraordinary sanctity and nakedness. In Persia at the present day the dervishes or religious mendicants sometimes go about stark-naked.—*Persia as it is*, by C. J. Wills, M.D., p. 92.

† Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

‡ Long before the Christian era, holy men, aspiring to subdue and surmount the body, had exhausted the possibilities of similar asceticism. When Alexander the Great crossed the Indus in the year 326 B.C., a strange spectacle was

The ruling idea of the ascetic being to make his own salvation sure, he pursued means exclusively directed to that supreme end. In the manifold concerns of the world that was his one concern. He had no notion of sinking self and working out his own salvation through the salvation of others, by throwing his energies into the service of their welfare. In this respect he was a natural morbid product of Christian doctrine and practice, a sort of monstrosity bred in its womb of subjective feeling and thought. For such product is the deformed outcome of the evil side of the doctrine which teaches the good Christian to make it his first and last aim in life to save his own soul for eternity by diligent and inquisitive introspection, in order watchfully to foster every holy and repress every unholy thought and feeling; carefully pruning this and propping that, like a good gardener in his garden, pulling up a weed here and planting a flower there, watering and tending everywhere. The sure effect of that method of minute self-prying and self-tending, when carried to excess, is over-tender sensibility and unwholesome growth of self—an essentially morbid egoism issuing naturally in the ascetic and his fanatical follies. It must be a tough business at the best to achieve true self-renunciation by a method which, when misused in the least, leads inevitably to an extreme and over-sensitive self-consciousness—to surmount self by thinking continually of self.

presented to him. "In the suburbs of the large towns, in the open plains, or in the woods which then covered so large a portion of the Punjaub, numbers of priestly devotees, wise and holy men, were to be seen silent and immovable, and apparently devoid of sensation, in various attitudes and conditions, sitting, lying, or standing in postures of great physical constraint or of positive suffering—some standing upright from morn till eve on their toes; or with uplifted arms bearing a heavy weight; or with perpetually clenched hands, so that the nails grew out through the palms; or with limbs so long kept immovable that the muscles became permanently rigid and unbendable. In the hot season, some of these devotees sat between four fires, exposed to the full blaze of the torrid sunshine, when the naked foot of the Greeks could hardly bear contact with the glowing soil; and in the rainy season they equally sat naked, or else in dripping robes, enduring all extremes of the weather and season. These motionless human figures ate only at long intervals, and very sparingly, living on the rudest kind of uncooked vegetable food." The quotation is from an article on "Pessimism and its Religions," in the *British Quarterly Review* for October, 1885.

CHAPTER V.

NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL RELIGION.

THE common principle of the religions and morality of all ages and places has been that of self-renunciation—self-suppression, obligatory or voluntary, for the good of the family and the community in the first instance, and the rise and expansion of this discipline of self afterwards, in ascending moral growth, to self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-renunciation. Rudimentary or complete, it is that which is their common inspiring principle; that in them which, by a survival of the fittest, has continued to be; that which is the cement of social life where theology is wanting; that, therefore, which is the destined note of the ultimate system. The sublime truths and lofty principles of morality were nowise Christian discoveries; they are to be found plainly enunciated in religions prior to Christianity and in the writings of heathen philosophers; what it did was to supply the powerful arguments of Heaven and Hell to enforce the practice of the precepts.

Very different has it been with the theological systems of the different religious creeds that have risen and set in the revolution of things. There has been no agreement between the many and various nations concerning the shapes and doings of the supernatural; nor was agreement possible, seeing that there was no common method of enquiry and reasoning by which men might reach a common conclusion, nor any common standard by which to measure the value of the different conclusions actually reached. Being of supernatural origin and authority in each case, the revelation was the special gift or privilege of the particular people to whom it was made—part of their mode of thought and feeling,

which, like language, differentiated them—the bond and symbol of national unity. As the inmost embodiment and strongest expression of national feeling, it naturally also in due course became the channel through which the national antipathies and animosities found vent, itself in turn intensifying and strengthening them; wherefore in the end that which theoretically ought to be the bond of peace and union between men of different nations, bringing them into unity of aspiration and life on the common ground of humanity, was an impassable wall of separation between them.* It is notorious that we meet with no more complete dividing barrier between Christian and Moslem at the present day than their different religions, while the different sects of the Christian religion, much as they profess to have in common beneath differences, and little as their differences signify, are separated by acrid animosities which plainly prove how much more human than Christian nature there is in pious persons.

In essential meaning religion is the universal bond or cement of society; religions therefore are many, and that religion is the best which inspires and holds together the best social system in the most complete harmony of parts, inspiring the units of it so to do those things which ought to be done and to leave undone those things which ought not to be done towards one another, as to keep it in the best health—that is to say, most holy.† In order to effect this excellent unity it

* He who attacked the national religion provoked much the kind of hatred which the Christian provoked in the time of Nero. He was an outlaw from God and man, *hostis patriæ, humani generis inimicus, hostis deorum atque hominum.*

† Not that the social feeling is by any means the whole of that complex of notion and sentiment which people mean by religion. There is plainly also the notion and feeling of a power outside the individual and superior to him, demanding his obedience, and making for a larger end than he can comprehend—a power which he cannot but obey, suffering and failing where he does not, increasing and profiting where he does. This supreme power has been variously conceived and named by different people in different ages and places, according to the methods and measures of their intellectual and moral development. However it be named now—whether it be, as Comte maintains, the environment, physical and social, in which each one lives and moves and has his being; or whether it be thought of in the abstract form of the unity of an infinite spirit—it has supplied the pressure from above or without by which the development of social and moral feeling among men has taken place. Social union was necessary,

is essential to control, regulate, and combine in collective social action the self-regarding impulses of the individual, which else would become anti-social and destructive. That is what the social nature in man represents; he has slowly learnt through the ages to control and utilize in social developments the egoistic forces of the individual, not by suppression of them, but by social combinations and altruistic transformations of their energies, and has risen so high in consequence above the level of other carnivorous creatures that he can now extirpate, eat, and use them, instead of being extirpated, eaten, and used by them.

What, then, is needed essentially in an organ of true religion? Not an anti-social monster of mystic or ascetic fanaticism, with more of the madman than of the saint in him, who nurses the development of an exaggerated selfhood by withdrawal from the salutary duties and disciplines of social life, but a rational being with common human sympathies, who disciplines self systematically by sincere and sober working for the good of the community in a wholesome reasonableness of life; one who, checking undue self-consciousness and eschewing singularities and other ostentations and distinctions of self, achieves the best development of his own nature by developing the altruistic and moral element of it in sane proportion and of sane quality. To make his nature such that he acts from self-love when he acts for others—if he can think well enough of his kind to co-operate heartily with it—is the right aim of moral development; the salutary

in the first instance, to bare success in the struggle for existence against the powers without—in the struggle to be; and the inevitable effect of social action is to stimulate social feeling. Improvement of material condition goes along with increased knowledge of the order of nature and intelligent submission thereto—such is wisdom; improvement of social and moral condition goes along with the increase of social affections and good will among men—such is love. Whatever the theory, then, of the external power, the practical result as regards human behaviour in relation to it is much the same—viz., to obey the commandments of the Lord and love Jesus Christ whom He has sent: to conform to the order of nature and feel the solidarity of mankind. It is obvious that, in proportion as the feeling of solidarity has increased, so has the notion of a despotic power, inspiring only fear and abject submission, been permeated by the feelings and supplanted by the notion of a benevolent power, inspiring affection and willing obedience: Jehovah supplemented by Jesus—that has been the order of natural evolution.

sphere of religious activity for the individual to work among and for his kind, to surmount self by not thinking of self, to gain his own salvation through the salvation of others. Moral and religious development is certainly not a matter of speculative science—it is an end to be gained only by practice; and always the soundest morality is that which is the least self-conscious.

So far from sound religion requiring mortification of mind and body by gloom, sadness, remorse, fastings, penances, and other austerities of the kind, in order to propitiate and please a dread supernatural being, it calls for the full and joyous development of all the functions, bodily and mental, of the individual, in order to perfect the natural being. If true holiness is true healthiness, that is the best religion which fits the individual best for all his relations as a social being. Nothing can be greater folly than to separate the human and the animal in the man, and to set them over against one another as different and hostile factors having different ends. The human could no more exist without the animal than a plant conld live without its root; and the wise person who would make the best of himself and the most of life will take good care of his body, gratifying every sense as well and in as many ways as he can, so long as it is done with due regard to the rights of other senses and the well-being of the whole organism.* To weaken the body by fasts and penances in order to develop religious insight and feeling is unholy because it is unhealthy; it is to enervate intellect and feeling and to dispose it to convulsive or delirious function. Is there a more miserable sinner against the dignity of manhood, a deeper-dyed pessimist, than the ascetic who regards life as a crime for which he must continually do penance? who emasculates manliness and calls it saintliness?

The exaggerated and unwholesome egoism which takes not the inward way of solitary mysticism, of asceticism, of sentimental brooding, but the outward way of fanatical propagation

* Under the conditions of being able to renounce any or every indulgence if there be good reason for the self-denial. That is true and healthy *asceticism;* it is the element of truth too, perhaps, which underlies the squalid travesties of the half-insane and histrionic ascetic.

of new doctrine along with passionate assault on old doctrine, seems on the whole to be less demoralizing to the individual, and may be more useful to the community, if the new thing chance to be a true development. But when such is its fortune, are we to suppose, because of its truth, that it owed its inspiration and power to more than natural sources? Is it a supernatural event to be helplessly wondered at? Or is it a natural event to be studied diligently according to the positive methods of science? In times past, when there was almost entire ignorance of natural causes, the invention of supernatural agencies was legitimate and necessary; when kings governed by divine right prophets could not well claim less than divine inspiration; but in what light ought such inventions and pretensions to be viewed by an age which is occupied systematically in searching out the natural causes and laws of events, and in dissipating the mysteries of supernatural phenomena?

In this connection it is right to reflect that for the most part the successes only of prophets have come down to us; the failures have been forgotten. For every prophet whose mission bore fruit there were many prophets whose missions came to abortive ends. Of them we hear nothing; and those who did hear of them at the time did not deem them worthy of serious notice, certainly did not think them supernaturally inspired when they saw their failures. Then, as now in Eastern countries, the event was the test; success was the proof of divine inspiration, failure the proof that the inspiration was that of madness. "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? . . . If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken it."*

Most Protestants now reject as spurious all supernatural visions and miracles since apostolic times. Those testified to in the Scriptures they profess to accept; the rest they look upon as the offspring of deranged mental function or of imposture. On the other hand, a few sober Roman Catholic theologians excepted, most Catholics account genuine the

* Deut. xviii. 21, 22. Victrix causa Diis placuit the natural judgment of reason, whether the moral judgment—the sed victa Catoni—be in conformity with it or not.

which happened from the middle
nth century, assign high places
they befell, and commend the
ithful as edifying reading.* That
l experiences in all times: to the
the unbelieving they are imposture
cles did not of themselves prove
though they might be cited in evidence, for,
His disciples, many false prophets
ys and show great signs and won-
if it were possible, to seduce the very elect.
guarantee the miracle, not the miracle the
ity of it is that the common doctrine of the
not define the miracles which it is incumbent
to believe in common.
played by supernatural visions and miracles
ation of a faith was subsidiary to the doctrine,
guaranteed them, it follows that they may really
out of account without injury to the essentials
which they encumber and sometimes embarrass
help, not otherwise, in fact, than as those signs and
that occurred in connection with abortive religious
have fallen into oblivion or been discarded as
Not so easily, certainly, forasmuch as they obtain
credit from the successful work of which they are
incidents. Being so closely linked to the move-
human development through the ages, the reluctance
to part with them; faith clings to the hallucinations
relinquish them would be to repudiate the movement;
makes up for their unreality and infuses the
believers with the bias necessary to subjugate reason
compel belief in them. Nevertheless, it clearly appears
hallucinations and supernatural visions are upon
level in respect of inherent authority, which is
the credit or discredit which they have being in
derivative.

* A good Catholic must believe, as Cardinal Newman persuaded himself he did, that "Saints now Saints have raised the dead to life, crossed the sea with-
multiplied grain and bread, cured innumerable diseases, and stopped
the laws of the universe in a multitude of ways."

What right have we to think nature under any sort of obligation to do its work by means of complete minds only? It evidently sometimes finds an incomplete mind the most suitable instrument for its purpose. It is the work that is done and the quality in the worker by which it was done that are alone of moment; and it may be no great matter, from a cosmical standpoint, if in other qualities of character he was singularly defective—if, indeed, he were hypocrite, adulterer, eccentric, or lunatic. Those are mere terms of human qualification; they have no cosmic significance. As it has always been, so it must needs always be during the long, long time the world shall last: the vice, and folly, and wrath, and madness of men alike serve and praise the Power which is praised and magnified also by sun and moon, by winds and storms, by plagues and famines, by wars and slaughter, by all living things, and all that is done by them, whether good or ill, on the earth.* The history of human thought through the ages is in the main a history of a long series of successive illusions and disillusions; and what pre-eminence, except in length of days, has an illusion which dies at the end of a century over an illusion which dies with the individual?

* It is the deeply spiritual poet Wordsworth who says emphatically of war—

"God's most perfect instrument,
In working out a pure intent,
Is man, arrayed for mutual slaughter;
Yea, Carnage is God's daughter."

Pious persons who disquiet their minds with anxious and useless enquiries concerning what they call the mystery of evil are really guilty of foolish impiety; against logic and against the positive authority of Scripture, they would have evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it. The American Episcopalians in revising the Anglican Prayer-book have illogically left out the passage in which God is said "to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death."

NOTE TO PAGE 203.

The *stigmatics* are those entranced persons, commonly unmarried women, who, during their trances or ecstasies, are affected with bleedings from the palms of the hands, the forehead, and perhaps the side, in imitation of the wounds which Jesus Christ suffered on the cross. A notorious recent case was that of Louise Lateau, the Belgian stigmatic, who for a long time excited and attracted the reverential awe and gratified credulity of admiring believers. What became of her in the end I never heard or read. But there is a long and full account of a similar case in a Catholic magazine called the *Month* (October, 1885), entitled "A Modern Stigmatic."

Anne Catherine Emmerich was born at Flamske, a little hamlet in Westphalia, of poor and ignorant but pious parents, on September 8th, 1774, and was baptized the same day. She was a wonderfully precocious child; "she seemed to realize the privileges to which baptism admitted her, and, leaning from the nurse's arm, she dipped her tiny hand into the holy-water font, in order to obtain its beneficial effects." In her second year "she began the practice of vocal prayer, when she could only lisp a few words, and it is not possible to say how soon her visions began, for as soon as she could speak plainly, the wonders revealed by infused light into her soul were made known to all around." "As soon as she opened a book she could read its contents, and the Latin prayers of the Mass and all the ceremonies of the Church were perfectly intelligible to her." Such and of such miraculous nature were the early accomplishments of the inspired baby. "No one, therefore, who possesses even a rudimentary acquaintance with the Christian life will be surprised to hear that the enemy of mankind was ruthless and determined in his attacks upon Anne Catherine." Frequently, for example, when she went to pray before a rustic crucifix which stood in the centre of the village, he appeared to her in the horrible and repulsive form of a dog-like creature with a huge head; and sometimes his attempts were directed against her life.

After the sacrament of her Confirmation, when in her eighteenth year, it was revealed to her that "in the sight of God she held the place of Holy Church, and she was to bear the same wounds, incur the same dangers, and undergo the same persecutions that menaced either the whole body or its individual members." But it was not until she was twenty-eight years old that she attained the goal of her lifelong desires and was admitted into a convent. There at first, and afterwards in a small room of a widow's house to which she was removed when the convent was suppressed, this "chosen servant of God" fell into ecstasies, in which she lay with blood flowing from the palms of the hands and from the soles of the feet, and from a "double cross which had appeared upon her breast, bleeding every Wednesday." "Soon after she had received the unspeakable privilege of bearing in her body the wounds of our Lord she began to adapt herself to the form of a cross, and, whether sitting or lying, her feet involuntarily crossed one over the other as those of a crucifix, and the soles being pierced through, as well as the palms of her hands, the effort to move or to make use of them could not but cause her extreme pain." Her visions were of the most marvellous kind; the accounts of what she saw and went through in them evincing an amount and an accuracy of knowledge which, as the writer of the article says, is "utterly inexplicable,

except on the hypothesis of a supernatural revelation." Not only the past history of the world, but its present and future history, "was unveiled to her prophetic gaze." Remarkable, too, was her power of recognizing relics, as soon as they were presented to her. On one occasion, for example, a relic was brought to her, sewn up in a little bag of red velvet; she saw instantly that it contained "a morsel of stuff that had touched the Saviour's crib, and also some splinters from the wood of the same." When the bag was opened, there was found in it just what she had described.

She died about half-past eight o'clock on the evening of the 9th of February, 1824, having, like many of the saints, foreseen her own death some time before it actually happened. "Her vicarious sufferings were carried on at an accelerated pace during the last months of her earthly career, as if, knowing she had but a brief period wherein to labour for others, she had desired to do the most she could in that time."

The story of these miraculous phenomena is told with entire faith by the writer of the article, who refuses to entertain the suspicion of the least fraud on the part of the stigmatics. Physicians may justly be more sceptical, for they are presented from time to time with similar unaccountable bleedings from different parts of the body by hysterical patients, which, if they take pains enough, they discover to have been artificially produced. Some years ago a young woman who had practised a fraud of the kind for some time with success was detected in one of the London hospitals by means of a piece of tinfoil introduced secretly into the covering which was placed and secured with ostentatious care over the bleeding part. When the sealed covering was removed, which had clearly not been disturbed meanwhile, there was the bleeding; but the tinfoil was found, on examination, to be perforated with a number of pinholes. I doubt whether there is on record a single well-authenticated case to justify the opinion that these stigmatic bleedings may be produced naturally by the exceeding and specific intensity of the imagination acting upon the particular areas affected.

The stigmatics belong to the same class as the malingering hysteric of the present day who excites the curiosity and admiration of the countryside by professing to live without food, and who carries on the imposture so long as the atmosphere in which she lives is favourable to it. Such a person reacts to the impressions of admiring interest and curiosity to which she is subject; she imbibes the social atmosphere, and her pranks reflect the unwisdom of those about her. The special interest of the story in the *Month* lies in this fact—that in this day and generation a number of educated people should be capable, by means of fit training, of so maiming and moulding their intellects as sincerely to think such frauds proofs of miraculous and divine agency, and to present the stories of them as edifying reading to the faithful.

Part III.

THEOPNEUSTICISM: THE ATTAINMENT OF SUPERNATURAL KNOWLEDGE BY DIVINE INSPIRATION.

SECTION I.

ECSTATIC INTUITION.

LANGUAGE being deemed a faculty much above the reach of human invention, has been accounted a special gift of God to man. Other human inventions achieved gradually by his perfecting efforts through the ages—the discovery and uses of fire, the cultivation of wheat, the production of wine from the grape, and the like—once ascribed to the special favours of special gods, have lost the sanctity of a supernatural origin since an increased knowledge of natural causes has demonstrated their natural origin. Nevertheless, that experience has not hindered language from keeping its privilege as a God-given endowment, the high special distinction of man separating him from all other living creatures by an impassable chasm.

As it was with language, so it was with a certain class of ideas. Always since mankind began to think of the mysteries of their being—to ask in self-conscious wonder the why, whence, and whither of themselves—they have had the desire or conviction of a higher source of knowledge than sense and experience. Resenting the narrow bounds of natural knowledge, and impatient of the humble methods of its tedious attainment, they have yearned for the completeness and certainty of a supernatural knowledge and aspired to a superior method of instant intuition; and their yearning aspirations have found vent and satisfaction in a variety of theories concerning a supernatural world and in the exultant consecration of a special channel of mental illumination.

The various means by which, in different ages and places, the supernatural has been diversely revealed to different people may be grouped roughly into three principal classes: first, the

visible appearance of the god, or of his messenger or angel, who revealed directly to the favoured person, by visible signs or articulate voice, that which he was chosen to know, each people having its own god or gods, whose revelations exactly answered to the measure of its intellectual and moral growth; secondly, a mysterious and overpowering possession, by the god, of the individual, who, thrown thereby into violent agitations of body and mind, or into trance-like unconsciousness of surrounding things, poured forth unconsciously, or in obedience to irresistible impulse, utterances that were sometimes quite incoherent and unintelligible, requiring a special interpreter or prophet to make known the meaning of them, sometimes sufficiently coherent to take their place, when written down, as holy scriptures;* thirdly, the exaltation of the individual into a spiritual ecstasy, during which, rapt from things of sense and transported out of himself into direct communion with God, he discerns transcendent truths of the spiritual world quite beyond his natural apprehension by sense and reason.

Notable at once in the survey of these methods of supernatural communication is a progressive development, in the shape of a progressive refinement, of them. There is a material grossness in the early methods repugnant to the abstract refinement of modern thought. With exceptions here and there among ignorant people in unenlightened countries or provincial districts, the singularity of which brings out into strong relief the general rule, any one seeing God or the angel of God would be thought a fit person to be placed under care and treatment as a lunatic, rather than a fit person to be canonized as a saint or revered as an inspired prophet. Nor is any one nowadays eager to discover a divine meaning in the incoherence of delirium. Were it alleged anywhere that in a certain assembly

* "The Australian native-doctor is alleged to obtain his initiation by visiting the world of spirits in a trance of two or three days' duration; the Khond priest authenticates his claim to office by remaining from one to fourteen days in a languid and dreamy state, caused by one of his souls being away in the divine presence; the Greenlander angekok's soul goes forth from his body to fetch his familiar demon; the Turanian sharman lies in lethargy while his soul departs to bring hidden wisdom from the land of spirits. The literature of more progressive races supplies similar accounts." See TYLOR's *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 439, who quotes a multitude of authorities.

on a certain day there was a strange sound as of a rushing mighty wind, the effect of which was that all those who were present were filled with a supernatural spirit and began straightway to speak in unknown tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, the universal opinion would be that which the unbelieving bystanders formed then—that these persons were either drunk or mad.* It is the third method, that of spiritual impregnation, which alone has vitality now among educated persons in civilized countries.

What, then, is the real nature of this ecstatic intuition? Is it a clear and sure means of acquiring truths of the spiritual world, a genuine divine illumination, and the means by which alone it is vouchsafed to man to learn them? At the outset, note has to be taken of the fact that it is a state which is not peculiar to any one people, or to the disciples of any one religion. Brahmins and Mahometans, as well as Buddhists and Christians, the devout votaries of all sorts and conditions of religion, have discovered and used the methods of inducing the abnormal state of the nervous system; all alike have perceived the necessity of performing the kind of mental dislocation which is called the abstraction of the mind from the body, in order to enter into direct communion with God.

The mode of the operation is in this wise: by intense and prolonged concentration of thought into one channel, the concentration being aided by fixing the gaze intently for some time on a particular spot—whether it be an external object such as a crucifix, or a particular part of the body such as the pit of the stomach—the fitly disposed mind is thrown eventually into a cramp-like ecstasy in which sense and reason are suspended, conscious individuality lost in a transport which is felt as an absorption into the divine being, and ineffable truths then revealed to the merged and enraptured soul, not by slow steps of discursive reason but by immediate and instant intuition.†

Behold, then, the progress made in the modes of supernatural intercourse! Formerly the god appeared visibly to the person

* "These men are filled with new wine." (Acts ii. 13.)

† Usually the Brahmin devotee keeps on murmuring to himself or inaudibly pronouncing the mystical "Om," his mind concentrated the while on the deity, until at last even thinking is extinct, personal individuality lost, and the soul merged into the universal soul.

with him, or took violent possession of
into convulsions and delirious ravings
uttered utterances of the overwhelming in-
not thought that anything more happens
transport of the nervous system during which
to such a state of exaltation and detachment,
a divine influx streams directly into it from
and illuminating. Not a state of definite
with God, but a blissful consciousness, vague
the sweet fruition of God. However, the funda-
is essentially the same in both cases: that
ordinary states of the nervous system, often quite
from morbid states, are the special occasions
a stream of divine influx into man. Whatever
the ecstasy in which a person is rapt *out*
by divine action has all the outward and visible
the ecstasy in which he is *beside himself* through
Has it, then, transcendent meaning in the one,
in the other case?

naturally from the employment of the method
intuition by the votaries of different religions that
are as diverse as the religions. The reason-
truths obtained in that way are Christian truths
perform, they are quite different truths when
Brahmin works himself into a like transport.
thing is true of its use by two Christians of
of thought and feeling: St. Theresa's visions
example, do not agree with the visions which
had of Him, being indeed in some respects,
in respect of the Trinity, quite contradictory; and
Unitarian's intuition of God lacks necessarily the
Christ. It is the pity of the method that, vitiated
subjectivity of the individual, it necessarily fails to
uniform results when used by the followers of different
by different followers of the same religion, even by
person in differing moods and seasons of life. How-
pure the divine stream which flows into the medium, it
not clear and unpolluted; every subject discharges
the hue and hue of his particular thought and feeling.

To eliminate the personal infection and get directly at the pure fountain of inspiration is impossible. The result is that the doctrine of personal inspiration holds its ground in the abstract, but is lost in morasses of contradictions and perplexities so soon as it is translated from its lofty and misty heights into the inspiration of particular persons or dogmas.

Plotinus, the eminent founder of the school, if not of the principles, of Neoplatonism, enjoys high credit as an authority on the method of ecstatic perception. He, perhaps, was the first in the West to formularize it definitely (having taken it bodily from the Hindu) as a means of knowing the infinite, which, as he maintained, reason never can know, since reason cannot go beyond the finite; it being clearly not possible for a finite person to know the infinite without the finite becoming infinite. The infinite can be known only, then, by transcending the limitations of personality—that is, by the separation of the soul from its individual consciousness and its absorption into the infinite intelligence from which it emanated; and the extraordinary function by which it is able to escape from its personality and to merge temporarily into the infinite is *ecstasy*. This is not, like reason, a faculty of which the individual is always possessed; it is an occasional and passing state of mind springing out of a strong enthusiasm—a transient flash of transcendental rapture; and what it truly means is a temporary escape of the soul from the thrall of the body, a brief union of the divine spark within man with its infinite source.* It is the soul's good fortune, too, when it comes back to its personality or self, to remember in its finite capacity the infinite which it could not know in that capacity; else how could Plotinus ever have known and described the trial and success of his method? For that which he was unable to know as an individual he was able, as an individual, to recount his knowledge of; notwithstanding the obvious difficulty which an experience only possible to him when his soul was separated

* "Il n'y a qu'une chose nécessaire: posséder Dieu . . . Il faut savoir se détacher de tout ce qu'on peut perdre, ne s'attacher absolument qu'à l'éternel et à l'absolu et savourer le reste comme un prêt, un usufruit."—*Henri Frédéric Amiel*, vol. i. p. 8.

from its consciousness and merged in the infinite must have had to be existent to him as an experience, and to impart itself to others, when he was again conscious and finite. Had he perchance seen, *when himself*, the same scenes which he saw when rapt *out of himself* in ecstasy, he might have formed a different estimate of their value; not otherwise than as the waker from a dream is compelled to estimate its apocalyptic profundity at a very shallow depth.

Of this unique and mysterious method of obtaining revelations of the infinite by being at one time infinite and at another time finite, and of communicating in a finite capacity to finite beings experiences gained when infinite, it is necessary here only to say two things. First, the theory of it is evidently at bottom a refined evolution of the savage's cruder opinion that in dreaming the spirit leaves the body, coming back to it when the person awakes; not coming back to it at all when he dies, but flitting dismally in ghost-like disconsolateness about the scenes of its former joys and sorrows. Secondly, the method is uncertain and useless; uncertain, because the value of its results rests entirely upon the authority of the individual, who may be misled himself or may wilfully mislead; useless, because this possible vitiation renders it impossible ever to know when to depend upon it, seeing that there is no approved test by which to prove its differing results in the hands of different persons and to settle which is the true one.

The perplexed enquirer is very much in the position of a belated traveller, who, about to cross some vast waste of unknown country, appeals for assistance to a number of clamorous guides, not one of whom has ever set foot in the country, but each one of whom professes, by looking into a special magic crystal of his own, to be able to see and to trace clearly the right path through it. Although the traveller might think it possible that one of the guides, no two of whom agreed, was seeing and speaking the truth by chance, he would be quite uncertain which it was, and, if wise, conclude it to be certainly useless for him to take any notice of the contradictory statements made to him.

SECTION II.

ECSTASY OF FEELING.

LARGE and comfortable use was made of the method of direct communion with God by the early Christians. They were the enthusiastic devotees of it, and in their practice it reached a delirious rapture and high repute, though never, perhaps, so ecstatic a detachment as among the Brahmins. It was the means by which faith found firm footing to transcend the limitations of the understanding and to reach that strain of sublime exaltation in which it received and embraced joyfully truths not transcending only, but even contradicting reason. Tertullian's saying, "Credo quia impossibile," was perhaps that faith's supreme flight,-if indeed St. Theresa's saying, "The more it seems impossible, the more I believe it," were not a higher achievement.

In the threefold division of the Jewish temple into the *holy of holies*, the *sanctuary*, and the *court*, the Christians discerned a symbolization of a threefold division of the human mind and a threefold dignity of human knowledge: the *external senses* apprehending sensible things, which is the court; the *intellect* or *understanding* working on the materials of sense to produce higher truths, which is the sanctuary; and the *heart* or *conscience*, embracing things of faith, which is the holy of holies, the inner sanctuary, into which streams the divine influx of love, and reason may not enter. Having discovered these significant similitudes of truth spiritual in a material temple, it was in accordance with the ingenuous habit of the human mind to believe that the ingenious similitudes were proof of the doctrine, which thenceforth had the guarantee of divine prefiguration; and, at any rate, no question could arise as to the existence of two distinct

orders of truths—the knowledge of things without, obtained through observation of the senses and reflection; and the knowledge of things spiritual, obtained from within by an influx of divinity and known intuitively. The one was the means of becoming acquainted with the visible things of creation, the other the means of becoming acquainted with creation's invisible Creator.

Saint Augustine has left on record in his *Confessions* an elaborate and instructive account of the long process of yearning thought and feeling through which he went in straining to attain to the ecstatic knowledge of God. Passing from the knowledge of things obtained through the bodily senses, whither to reach the faculties of beasts, and thence to the reasoning faculty, to which what is received from the senses is referred to be judged, as he said, and finding these all to be variable, his yearning and straining soul at last raised itself above its low understanding, withdrawing itself from things of sense and intellect, and reached by a sudden leap the knowledge of the unchangeable to be preferred to the changeable.

"And thus," he continues, "with the faith of one trembling glance it arrived at THAT WHICH-IS. And then I saw the invisible things understood by the things which are made. But I could not fix my gaze thereon; and, my infirmity being struck back, I was thrown again on my wonted habits, carrying along with me only a loving memory thereof, and a longing for what I had, as it were, perceived the odour of, but was not yet able to feed upon."*

By concentration of his mental energies on a special tract of thought and feeling, and by a persistent keeping up of this

* The process and its results are everywhere the same—as much alike almost as the course and symptoms of the same disease in different patients. After praying, groaning, weeping, calling on God out of the very depths of despair—perhaps for days or weeks following—a sudden sense of conversion and assurance of acceptance takes place. A convulsive reaction from the prostrate nervous state translates itself into a delirium of delight. See John Dawson's experience as it is recorded in Southey's *Life of Wesley* (vol. ii. p. 12), who says, "Quickly after, in the twinkling of an eye, all my trouble was gone, my guilt and condemnation were removed, and I was filled with joy unspeakable. I was brought out of darkness into marvellous light; out of miserable bondage into glorious liberty; out of the most bitter distress into unspeakable happiness. I had not the least doubt of my acceptance with God."

train of activity, he was able after a time so to strain it that contact or circuit with other thoughts and feelings was broken, and freed for a time from their restraining hold—in fact, to dislocate it functionally; and the quasi-cataleptic or quasi-delirious condition thus engendered was accompanied by a transport of spiritual illumination and rapture. It was only, as he says, by passing beyond the power whereby he was united to the body and the powers of his nature, to the very soul of which God is the life, as it quickeneth and giveth life to the body, that he could ascend to Him. But the difficulty naturally was to perpetuate this extraordinary state. For although the result of its induction was that "Thou admittest me to an affection, very unusual, in my inmost soul, which, if it were perfected in me, I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come," yet, "through my miserable encumbrance, I sink down again into these lower things, and am swept back by custom and held back."

If the passing of St. Augustine's mind beyond the tie by which it was united to his body was the functional passing of a specially invoked and provoked cerebral tract out of its concord and relations with other tracts of the mental fabric and the suspension of their functions during the ultra-physiological exaltation of its exclusive activity, as I have given reasons to think, we need not wonder at, nor need he have accused, the encumbrances of flesh whereby he was unable to keep up the rapture, but was forced to fall back into the custom of lower things.

What was the nature of the sweetness of the love of God which he tasted in the blissful moments of his soul's supreme rapture? It is well to set forth in his own words the description of a joy so ineffable.

"But what do I love when I love Thee? Not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time, nor the brightness of the light so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. None of these I love when I love my God; and yet I love a kind of light, and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement when I love my God—the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement, of my inner man: where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away,

and there smelleth what breathing dispenseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not. This it is which I love when I love my God."*

From the foregoing description we learn that the sensation in which being is absorbed during the spiritual orgasm is not precise and definite, but spacious and indefinite; not that of any one sense, but a vague, diffuse, and undefinable complex of all pleasant sensations refined and sublimated to the utmost; not simple or special sense-pleasure, but a kind of supreme and complex sense-delight; not joy of feeling bound to conditions of time and space, but a rapture of delight melting away into an infinite haze, a "sweet fruition of God." The ravished soul dissolves in a deliquium of delight. It is as if a much-straining individual could, by some fit expedient, kindle the internal organs of all his modes of sensory consciousness into a diffusive glow of blended activity, without the gross occasions of their natural external stimuli—without the light, or the sound, or the scent, or the locked embracements of limbs—and lose himself incontinently in the haze of this voluptuous abstract and complex of pleasant sensation; an extraordinarily induced orgasm of sense not to be kept up at best for more than a brief period, for to continue in it would be to lose savour if not to become unconscious of it; to be enjoyed only as a flash of ecstatic rapture—at all events under the "miserable encumbrances" of the physiological conditions of life on earth which preclude the perpetuity, necessitate the transience, of every pleasure. It will be seen later on that the induction of such a state of brain as expresses itself in this ecstasy of sense is possible, and that it goes along with a more or less complete suspension of all active bodily

* *Confessions*, p. 204. In this passage we recognize the original source of several like raptures in prose and poetry. For example—

> "It is no flaming lustre made of light;
> No sweet concert or well-timed harmony;
> Ambrosia for to feast the appetite,
> Or flowery odour mixed with spicery;
> No sweet embrace, nor pleasure bodily:
> And yet it is a kind of inward feast,
> A harmony that sounds within the breast;
> An odour, light, embrace, in which the soul doth rest."
>
> GILES FLETCHER.

movements—with a sort of catalepsy of body. Not only do the lives of saints, as told by themselves and attested by their admirers, abound in instances of the kind, but the records of mental pathology are full of them.

Ample and instructive evidence of the nature of the ecstatic transports, and of the actual visions sometimes engendered in them, is furnished by the life of St. Theresa, as recorded by herself. A child of highly imaginative nature, which she eagerly nourished by clandestine reading of the romances of chivalry so popular in Spain in her day, she formed a determined resolution, when eighteen years of age, after a mental struggle of three months' duration, "to bend her will to be a nun." In the convent to which she betook herself in pursuance of this aim her health gave way under the strain: she was subject to frequent fainting fits, so that she was obliged at last to be taken home by her friends; the pain in her heart was just "as if it had been seized by sharp teeth," and "so great was the torment that it was feared that it might end in madness"; she could not eat anything whatever, could only drink; for four days she was insensible, and in such apparently hopeless state that a grave was prepared for her; her tongue was bitten to pieces, and her body bent together like a coil of rope; she could not stir arm, foot, hand, or head, could only move one finger of the right hand, and was moved by being carried from place to place in a sheet.* After three years of this miserable suffering a gradual restoration to health took place, owing to the prayers of St. Joseph (as she believed), a saint for whom she had an especial love and veneration. Such was the beginning of the religious career of that most distinguished lady who afterwards was the subject of those remarkable ecstatic visions which she has described with singular lucidity of thought and expression, and with such a display of practical sagacity as marked the daily work of her later life.

* Physicians at the present day who are familiar with this sort of illness describe it as hystero-epilepsy and treat it accordingly; looking forward to a speedy cure of it when the patient can be taken away from her anxious and sympathetic friends—who, for the most part, increase it by their attentions and anxieties—and placed under suitable care and treatment.

This is the account which she gives of the rapture or ecstatic trance:—

"The soul, while thus seeking after God, is conscious, with a joy excessive and sweet, that it is, as it were, utterly fainting away in a kind of trance: breathing and all the bodily strength fail it, so that it cannot even move the hands without great pain; the eyes close involuntarily, and, if they are open, they are as if they saw nothing; nor is reading possible—the very letters seem strange and cannot be distinguished—the letters, indeed, are visible, but as the understanding furnishes no help, all reading is impracticable, although seriously attempted. The ear hears, but what is heard is not comprehended. The senses are of no use whatever, except to hinder the soul's fruition; and so they rather hurt it. It is useless to try to speak, because it is not possible to conceive a word; nor, if it were conceived, is there strength sufficient to utter it; for all bodily strength vanishes, and that of the soul increases, to enable it better to have the fruition of its joy. . . . A rapture is absolutely irresistible. . . . It comes, in general, as a shock, quick and sharp, before you can collect your thoughts, or help yourself in any way, and you see and feel it as a cloud, or a strong eagle rising upwards and carrying you away on its wings."

No ill effects followed the raptures when they were first experienced, but in the end they left her in pain over her whole body, as if her bones were out of joint; the kind of pain which hysterical and epileptic persons suffer after their fits.*

These raptures of St. Theresa exercised much the minds of her confessors and spiritual advisers, who were puzzled and divided in opinion concerning their real nature. The positive conclusion come to on one occasion, after formal conferences of five or six learned divines about her, was that she was deceived by Satan; and the judicious advice given to her in consequence was to communicate less frequently, to try to distract herself, and to be less alone. Even those who thought the raptures to be the work of the Spirit of God in her did not fail to discern a marked sensual flavour in some of them; one of the wisest and kindest of her confessors recommending her two things in consequence—namely, to resist to the utmost of her power the sensible sweetness and delight she felt in her rapture, and to practise greater outward mortification and penance.

* *Life of St. Theresa*, by the author of *Devotions before and after Holy Communion*.

Evidently the ardent spiritual love of the divine incarnate in human form did not always reach the perfect detachment and refinement of a pure spiritual communion with the divine not incarnate; it resulted sometimes in a voluptuous ecstasy or orgasm in which the saint felt herself received, like St. Catharine of Sienna, "as a veritable spouse into the bosom of her Saviour."* Indeed, when treating of the mode of inducing these ecstasies by endeavouring "to imagine ourselves present with Christ and take delight in Him," Theresa combats particularly, in one chapter of her life, the opinion of those spiritual writers who think no bodily object should intervene in wholly spiritual contemplation; that we ought so to abstain from all bodily imagination in contemplation of the Divinity as to put away the consideration of Christ's humanity. This, she maintains, "is making the soul, as they say, to walk in the air; for it has nothing to rest on, how full soever of God it may think itself to be. . . . We are not angels—we have a body; to seek to make ourselves angels while we are on the earth, and so much on the earth as I was, is an act of folly." Sagacious Theresa! ever wiser than her guides; she saw clearly that, however intensely and perseveringly any one may spiritualize thought and feeling, he cannot, while in the flesh, immaterialize them entirely.†

Later in life, when, being at the head of a convent, she had to deal as lady-abbess with the troublesome ecstasies of hysterical nuns, it was plain to her that they were not always of a divine character; and she protested against confounding the true divine inflation—the state in which the understanding ceases to act because God suspends it—with those devotional states of self-enforced rapture in which suffocating feelings

* See note at the end of this section.

† In which relation it is not without interest to note that St. Theresa's first attainment to the ecstasy of divine love, after long yearnings, doubts, strainings, and agonies of mind, was on the occasion of discovering and contemplating with rapt devotion a very realistic picture of a martyred saint—I think it was St. Joseph—which she discovered hidden away somewhere in the convent. Whatever the explanation, it is certain that a nude or nearly nude figure writhing in physical suffering, or in the convulsive agony of death, and with blood flowing from its wounds, has a singularly stimulating effect upon those functions of the brain that are most apt, when they overpass physiological bounds, to transport it into ecstasy.

and invasions of sensuality betray delusion and the work of Satan. She now perceived that there were really two states, easily confounded and not easily distinguished, according as the spiritual sublimation was more or less complete, namely, a mystical and ecstatic rapture in which the human is absorbed into the divine, and an ecstatic suspension of mental faculties in which the human is substituted for the divine.

It is a distinction between love and lust which other authorities on like spiritual seizures were compelled, in face of the gross lubricity sometimes displayed in them, to make; just as it was necessary to discriminate between the mania which was the result of inspiration, a divine madness, and the mania which was madness.* Then, as now, however, there was no criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false inspiration, the genuine from the counterfeit; the authorities of a particular creed, albeit in doubt sometimes whether the raptures of its votaries were divine, never doubting that the raptures of rival creeds were delusive and Satanic, and the subject of them being by the nature of the case unable to bring more proof in proof of them than his private proof of personal certitude.

* In various parts of his *Confessions*, St. Augustine's elaborate expositions of the inexpressible delights of heavenly love betray plainly their inspiration in the sensual delights of earthly love. Being a person of strong constitutional sensuality and African heat of temperament, who was much troubled throughout his life with the desires of the flesh, which he confessedly had not exhausted by the mistress-keeping excesses of his youth before he devoted himself to a spiritual life, he evidently found it a very hard thing to rise completely above sense into the serene air of the pure regions of spirit. His descriptions of his feelings of ecstatic love have sometimes a nasty flavour of sensuality in them, which render them repugnant to a manly continence of thought and feeling, and not wholesome reading for young and chaste minds. In this respect they are not altogether unlike the *Confessions* of Rousseau, who carried morbid introspection of feeling to a similar unwholesome pitch; in fact, as some German author has remarked, "Rousseau makes his confessions to the public, Augustine to God." Unfathomable are the possible contradictions and self-deceptions of human nature. How often it is unmanly incontinence which preaches ascetic continence! How often are the shrill denunciation of vice and the glorification of purity prompted at bottom by the attraction of impurity and the gratification of pruriency!

NOTE TO PAGE 255.

Instructive in this connection is the language of passion addressed to her divine spouse (who had promised her, by a miraculous communication in a trance, that she should be his bride) by *Marie de l'Incarnation*, the Superior of the first convent of Jesuits at Montreal (1620–1638). This and similar passages descriptive of organic passion provoked by imagination are extracted by her Catholic biographer as evidence of saintship and matter of edification: "Allant à l'oraison, je tresaillais en moi-même et disais: Allons dans la solitude, mon cher amour, afin que je vous embrasse à mon aise et que, respirant mon âme en vous, elle ne soit plus que vous-même par union de l'amour. . . . Puis, mon corps étant brisé de fatigue, j'étais contrainte de dire: mon divin amour, je vous prie de me laisser prendre un peu de repos, afin que je puisse mieux vous servir, puisque vous voulez que je vive. . . . Je le priais de me laisser agir; lui promettant de me laisser après cela consumer dans ses chastes et divins embrassemens. . . . O amour! quand vous embrasserai-je? N'avez vous point de pitié de moi dans le tourment que je souffre? Venez donc que je vous embrasse, et que je meure entre vos bras sacrés."—See PARKMAN'S *Jesuits in North America*, p. 177.

The method and practice officially recommended to inflame the imagination fitly and by its aid to evoke the divine vision were these: to strain the senses to the utmost—the sight to see the divine face, the ear to hear his voice, the touch to embrace Him, the taste and smell to perceive His ineffable sweetness; the nervous groundwork having been previously prepared by frequent fastings, prayers, and meditations in solitude. In due course, then, the aspirant, trembling, her whole body agitated, was dissolved in the rapture of a spiritual embracement and abandoned herself to Jesus in a passion of divine love—a quasi-convulsive discharge of the weakened and strained nervous system which was an identification with the infinite. By frequent repetition such nervous ecstasies lose their voluptuous intensity, and are followed by weary, sad, and aching feelings; so that it did not fail sometimes to happen to the saint, falling by natural reaction from the blissful height of exaltation, to sink into an arid void of feeling and a despairing dejection, which were then apt to be interpreted as evidence of divine desertion.

The two processes to be carefully gone through in order to get the best result are: first, a process of fit manufacture by training the individual from infancy to a fixed habit of thought and feeling—that is, an organic moulding of his mental nature by special function so that it shall work in a special way; secondly, the straining of the so fashioned special tracts by fitly exciting means until they explode in a quasi-convulsive activity.

SECTION III.

INTUITION OF THE HEART.

WE mount at once into a fresher and more wholesome air when, leaving these regions of sublimated sensuality, we come to Pascal's account of the intuitive source of knowledge. That great thinker argues that we know truth, not by reason only, but by the heart; that it is by the heart that first principles, such as *space, time, motion, number,* are known; that it is on such intrinsic knowledge of the heart, as sure as that of reasoning, that reason must fundamentally base itself. Principles are felt, propositions are concluded; and it is as ridiculous for the reason to demand from the heart proof of its first principles in order to assent to them, as it would be ridiculous for the heart to demand from the reason a feeling of all the propositions which it demonstrates, in order to accept them. Thus it is with divine truths, which God alone can impart to the soul, and in the way that pleases Him best. He has willed that they enter the understanding from the heart, not the heart from the understanding, in order to humiliate that pride of reasoning which assumes to be the judge of what the heart chooses. Such truths it is necessary to love in order to know. This is the supernatural order, quite contrary to the order natural to him in natural things, which God has established for man. In what a relative being *feels* there is a revelation of the absolute which cannot be in what he *knows;* he has feelings, in fact, which are not entirely relative, though he is.

Those who seek God through nature or by metaphysical proofs of His existence, Pascal declares, cannot attain to a knowledge of Him. For if there be a God He is infinitely

incomprehensible, seeing that, having neither extension, nor parts, nor limits, He has no relation to us; we are incapable, therefore, of knowing either what He is or that He is. He is a hidden God—*Deus absconditus*—far removed from human knowledge, who must be sought with the heart and with the whole heart. Reason cannot come to any conclusion in the matter. For the Christian to go to work to prove his faith in God would be proof of want of sense as well as want of faith: that he does not seek proof is proof that he does not want sense. There is nothing so consonant with reason as to disavow reason in matters of faith; nothing so contrary to reason as to disavow reason in things that are not matters of faith. Among the different religions that have been in the world in different places and at different times, not one has had more marks of truth than another to determine reason of necessity to incline to it. The reason cannot decide. But God reveals Himself in the Christian religion to the pure of heart, through Jesus Christ only, whom He has sent as Mediator; He requires of men no more than that they should love Him, and so know Him in loving. "Thus I stretch out my arms to my Redeemer, who, having been predicted during four thousand years, came to suffer and die for me on earth, at the time and in the circumstances predicted, and, by His grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united with Him."*

* *Pensées*, p. 111 (edition published by Garnier frères, Paris). In order to attain to the right mood of heart and mind for the reception of divine truth, it is necessary to follow the example of those who, once similarly benighted, have reached the light of faith. "Suivez la manière par ou ils ont commencé; c'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira" p. 72); *i.e.*, in St. Paul's language, become a fool in order to become wise. Thus clearly and logically, as always, does Pascal see that only by resolutely and systematically *derationalising* himself, and steadily cultivating a particular habit of feeling and thought, through suitable ceremonial acts, can man, who is a plastic organism, fashion himself into the incarnation of a particular faith, when reason, its instincts being nearly extinguished, will cease to disquiet him, and when, in accordance with a well-known law of mental development, he will feel pleasure in the exercise of his habit-formed structure. The narrator of the story of the *Stigmatic* (p. 238) proves plainly how successful a steadily pursued course of derationalization still is for its purpose.

It is wisely then that the Roman Catholic Church insists on the stringent Catholic education of children, in order to fashion them to a set form of thought

... is in the main adopted and ... in his subtile and elaborate ... human certitude.* For the dis... by Newman between *real* and ... drawn by Pascal between ... principles and the derivative ... incredible that Pascal could ... accepted the results of Newman's ... for while he scouted the notion ... God, seeing no means of arriving at ... apprehensible except through a medi... managed to discover an image of God ... of His attributes in the intuitions

... which we gain an image of God and ... proposition that He exists is by ... ciple, as the foundation of all enquiry ... we have by nature a conscience—*i.e.*, a ... and a magisterial dictate to do the ... else will follow from it; for it implies ... object towards which it is directed. ... stir our affections; these are correla... we feel responsibility this implies that ... we are responsible. And if the cause of ... belong to the visible world—a second ... Dr. Newman does not say so—the object ... must be supernatural and divine; and ... of conscience, as a dictate, avail to im... with the picture of a Supreme Governor, ...erful, all-seeing, retributive—and is the ... religion, as the moral sense is the prin... signal triumph of intellectual conjuring ... dent *doctrinal* consequences out of the ... conscience! What in the end is it but to

... reason—*i.e.*, so to *in-form* them that they can think ... way before they are capable of discerning between ... does it aim to keep the people in a state of mental ... Scriptures in language unintelligible to them.'

† *Grammar of Assent*, p. 110, 5th edit.

make God in Dr. Newman's own image—in the image, that is, of his moral judgment of things—to make his own mental idol? And what is the certitude of the concluded *notional* product worth when it is the immediate *feeling* only which has certitude? An idol is still an idol, though it be an idol of the heart.

Whatever the veracity of the argument, there can be no question of its splendid audacity. Examining it critically by the help of Pascal's solid principles (if they and it have been rightly understood), obvious difficulties obtrude themselves in the way of immediate assent. Let it be granted that the feeling of responsibility implies a living object towards which it is directed, as no one is likely to deny, why may not that object be a living being or beings belonging to the visible world? Why not those who being members of the one body of humanity are members therefore one of another? What right has Dr. Newman to slip quietly into his statement of the argument—insinuating it subtly as if it were part of it, when it is not an essential part of it at all, and as if it were an axiom needing no demonstration, when it is actually a tacit assumption needing the fullest demonstration—the stupendous assertion that the living object does not belong to the visible world, *must* be supernatural and divine, and to base on the shifty foundation of that *petitio principii* his large superstructure of momentous conclusion? How, again, can the correlative of the feeling of personal responsibility possibly be a supernatural God, seeing that God, as Pascal logically maintains, is infinitely incomprehensible and has not relation to us, having neither extension, nor parts, nor limits; that we are incapable of knowing either what He is or that He is; and that He reveals Himself to us only through Jesus Christ, who, because He shared as Mediator the divine and human nature, was able, by sole virtue of the human nature in Him, to bring man into relation with God. Certainly it is not Pascal who could ever think to perform the singular feat of making the correlate of a human feeling that with which human relations are not possible.*

* Because Pascal and Newman are great names in the religious world and they are justly esteemed great pillars of faith, not one in a thousand of those who join in laudation of them ever seriously considers, even if he read, what

However it be with particular differences between these two eminent authorities on the highest spiritual matters, they are at one in this general truth which is to be deemed indisputable —that the highest truths of Christian religion are to be known, and to be known only, by the heart; known as sensations are known, not by being apprehended but by being felt. The sentiment of them might be compared to the complex of fine and subtile feelings which the inspired artist, or poet, or musician kindles in the heart and mind of the person whose natural sensibilities have been cultivated to respond fitly to the thrilling inspiration of his work. As no one can feel or see beauty in the art who does not bring with him the faculty of seeing and feeling it, so the Christian must fitly prepare his soul for the reception of divine truths by weaning his affections from the things of earth and yielding his heart to the love of God; only thus can he know them. Feeling them vitally, he requires no argument to make him know them, and no argument, were it even uttered with the tongues of angels, will avail in the least to make him unknow them. And always he knoweth best who loveth best.*

Here notice may be fitly taken of the interesting fact that the spiritual sacrifice of the heart to God is a refined evolution of the gross notion of the physical offering of the heart to the god in the human sacrifices of barbarous religions. Among the Aztecs, for example, as among other man-sacrificing

these distinguished men have actually written. The sober truth is that the *Pensées* of the one and the *Grammar of Assent* of the other are two of the most profoundly sceptical, if not pessimistic, books in the world. Were it not for the history of his life the hostile suspicion might even suggest itself, not without some excuse, that Dr. Newman's book had been written in the subtlest irony, and with the most perfect *finesse*, with the insidious aim of discrediting human reason and faith. Certainly it fails not to yield strong evidence of the fundamental scepticism of his nature, *i.e.*, his unconscious nature, while furnishing at the same time plenteous and almost painful proof of persevering and systematic conscious intellectual struggles and ingenuities to expel it or to convince himself he had expelled it. In vain; *tamen usque recurret*. In his less eminent brother, F. W. Newman, nature had its sceptical way; as also in a third brother who did not distinguish himself favourably.

* In one of his letters Rousseau defends the existence of God, resting the defence upon *un sentiment intérieur*, the voice of nature infallible, whose dictates can alone preserve us against the delusions of reason which in the end would leave us nothing to believe.

peoples, the officiating pontiff laid open the victim's breast, tore out the heart, and offered it all bleeding and palpitating to the god in whose honour the sacrifice was performed.* Although no virtue, but a revolting barbarity, is now seen in actual bodily sacrifice, the thoughts and feelings of civilized men having moved away from that low material level, yet we justly see, in the gross offering of the organ which seemed to concentrate in itself the principle of the life and feeling of the individual, the divine prefiguration of the spiritual offering up of self as a living sacrifice to God, demanded of the Christian as the condition of the highest spiritual life.†

In religion, as in other things, the particular idea goes before the general or abstract idea; in religious beliefs therefore, as in other beliefs, the evidences of development are manifest enough when we look for them. To understand a creed it is necessary to go back to its crude beginnings and to trace them to their endings. As the saint's ecstasy was the spiritual evolution of the ecstasy of love, so the spiritual sacrifice of the heart to God is the gross offering of the material heart raised to its highest power of evolution; the circumcision of the heart the spiritual sublimation of the circumcision of the flesh; the spiritual body a sort of volatilization of the material body; the kingdom of Christ on earth the spiritual transformation of that earthly kingdom in which the disciples expected to reign in glory.

It is not in conformity with reason to think that what has been, and is, and is to be, can have been, is now, and will

* "And here you will recognize that idea, so widely spread in the two Americas, and indeed almost everywhere among uncivilized peoples, that the heart is the epitome, so to speak, of the individual—his soul, in some sense—so that to appropriate his heart is to appropriate his whole being."—RÉVILLE's *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 84.

It is easy to understand that the effect of the horrid spectacle was to stimulate intensely the religious emotion of the onlooking crowds of worshippers: first, by the contagion of excitement in the crowd and its increase to a blazing height through sympathy; second, by the strangely stimulating effect which the spectacle of blood and agony notably has sometimes upon organic passion.

† The Jews, like our Druidical forefathers, practised human sacrifices at one period of their history; and the apostle uses the obedience of Abraham, who was ready to offer up his only son Isaac, as an example of the obedience which the Christian ought to show in offering up himself spiritually.

be otherwise than in accordance with a fixed order of development. Always has the present its obligations to the past, its duties to itself, and its responsibilities to the future, having a heritage to receive, to improve, and to transmit; it cannot therefore repudiate the past nor cut itself off from the future in a world so ordered, whatever it might do in a chaos that was agitated aimlessly by some great anarch in frolic or in frenzy.

Is it true, then, and if true, how far true, that divine truths are apprehended by the heart and with intuitive certainty? Not the definite *doctrines* or *dogmas* of the Christian religion certainly; they are as distinct matters of intellectual apprehension as any other propositions in regard of which the understanding assents or dissents; to call them experiences of feeling, or to allege that they are known through feeling, would be to confound all distinction between understanding and feeling. Moreover, it would be to deny the capacity of elementary feeling of the things of highest human concern to all those people—the large majority of the human race—who cannot instinctively feel their truth and beauty. In order that the divine truths of Christianity may kindle a unison of feeling in the individual's heart his mind must, as Pascal and Newman carefully explain, be methodically moulded and attuned by fit training, not in the doctrines of the Scriptures only, but also in the canons and rites and offices of the Catholic Church, which is the repository of truth and the authorized and infallible interpreter of the ways of God to man: the reason must be resolutely, systematically, and perseveringly humiliated for the purpose of bringing it into a state in which, becoming foolish in order to be wise, it shall assent joyfully to truths that stultify it.* High treason verily against reason had not reason been deposed. But it is a cardinal truth of theology that what is *nonsense* to reason may be *sense* in religion.

* In one of his *Sermons to Mixed Congregations*, after he had joined the Church of Rome, Newman exclaims thus: "Oh long sought after, tardily found, the desire of the eyes, the joy of the heart, the truth after many shadows, the fulness after many foretastes, the home after many storms, come to her, poor children, for she it is, and she alone, who can unfold to you the secret of your being and the meaning of your destiny."

The differences among Christians respecting the essential tenets of their common creed, and the fierce persecutions with which the different sects in different times and places have rejoiced to pursue and afflict one another because of their irreconcilable differences of doctrinal opinion, are ample proof that doctrines are not matters of pure intuitive feeling. The prodigious importance ascribed to the minutest shades of doctrinal difference, "visible only to the nicest theological eye," is proof again how successfully man may so fashion himself artificially by special training as to sincerely think the veriest trivialities of thought to be transcendent things worth dying for and worth inflicting torture and death for. Nay, there need be no thought to wrangle about, a name will do. A common Christianity has always been consistent with an uncommon hatred, and uncommonly cruel persecutions, of one another by differently thinking Christians.

A frequent charge made by Protestants against the Roman Catholic Church is that it teaches, as matters of faith, a great number of theological doctrines which few can know and fewer understand; that it obliges every one to accept "as revealed truths all the Canons of the Councils and innumerable decisions of popes." (Newman.) Herein it moves on strictly logical lines; for the mode of training of thought and feeling necessary to fashion the disposition of mind able to accept one truth conflicting with or contradicting reason, or the contrary of another reverently accepted truth, will suffice, when carried far enough, to make it accept joyfully any number of truths conflicting with reason or contradicting one another; whereas to admit the right of private judgment in matters of supernatural revelation, where its principle is excluded at the outset, is to discard any standard of authority in the most difficult and momentous questions that concern mankind, and to lead to inevitable anarchy. That is just what has happened to Protestantism, as Catholics exult to point out; for, although all its sects profess to accept the supernatural authority of the Scriptures, no two of them agree in their interpretations of them; while individual members of different sects, each of whom sees what is right in his own eyes, allow themselves every kind and degree of

latitude in their expositions of the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. The licence of interpretation has been the dissolution of authority; and not of authority only but of conscience also, since it is largely the fashion now to repeat solemnly the phrases of beliefs not sincerely held, perhaps wholly transformed. The various creeds of Protestantism, having no fixed footing, are creeds of a sliding passage between Catholicism and Agnosticism—transitory, without unity and without authority.*

Matters have, indeed, been brought to such a pass by the dissolvent criticism of Protestant Christians that the anxious enquirer is compelled to ask, not how much, but how little, of Christian doctrine is revealed by direct intuition. What is the precious residuum of faith which now and for ever is beyond the reach of, or impregnable to, the assaults of reason? Presumably there are two such certainties—the certainty of an intuition of and communion with God, and the certainty of an eternal union with Him in a new life after death for those whose hearts are fired with fervent love. It is this thrill of love which, when it reaches the right glow of transcendental rapture, is the inspiration of the heart that gives intuitive knowledge to the understanding.

Here, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the

* "Every sober, humble, and discreet Christian might well reflect seriously on the advice given him by Dr. South (in his sermon on *The Wisdom of God in making Christianity mysterious*) to dread all tampering with the mysteries of our faith, either by any new and unwarrantable explications of them, or descants upon them; for," as he says, "we may here observe the true way by which these great and adorable mysteries of our religion come first to be ridiculed and blasphemed, and at length totally laid aside by some; and that is by their being first innovated upon and new-modelled by the bold, senseless, and absurd explications of others. For first of all such innovators break down those sacred mounds which antiquity had placed about these articles, and then heretics and blasphemers rush in upon them, trample them under foot, and quite throw them out of our creed. . . . For if some novelists may put what sense they please upon the writings of Moses, and others do the like with the articles of the Christian Church also (and the greatest encouragement attend both), I cannot see (unless some extraordinary providence prevent it) but that both these religions are in a direct way to be run down amongst us, and that in a short time too." To accept the Christian story of the Nativity and the scientific doctrine of evolution, that is surely the epitaph of the intellectual wholeness and moral sincerity of any mind.

two revelations made through the heart, since they plainly have not the same direct authority: first, the communion with God and intuition of His existence, which may be called the immediate experience of feeling; second, the certainty of an eternal life with Him hereafter, which it is manifest cannot be immediate experience of feeling and intuition therefrom, nor a necessary implication of that communion with God of which feeling has immediate experience. No finite being can have while finite an intuition of his own eternity; he may infer it, but at the best it is inference, not direct intuitive experience.

In respect of the direct intuition of God which loving hearts achieve, matters are not left by those who practise it in nearly so secure a position of certitude as could be wished. For nowhere is more emphatic stress laid upon this method of communion, and more positive claim made for its absolute authority, than by spiritually minded Unitarians, who, having robbed the Triune Deity of that which Christians think an essential part of His Godhead, and thus fearfully mutilated and blasphemed Him in Christian eyes, exhaust the capacities of Christian emotion and language in endeavours to express the inexpressible sweetness of the beatific communion. With whom? With God the Father without God the Son; not with the Christian's Father and Son in one God. It is a piously enthused Unitarian who enjoins upon us "to attain similitude and communion by loving self-abandonment"; to think of God "coalescing with our highest nature, to subdue and mould it all into sympathy with His own perfectness"; to "leave ourselves to the dear God who communes with us"; to "look into the loving eyes themselves of all that is good and holy"; and so on in like strains of emotional eloquence labouring to give effusive vent to ecstatic sentiments of the sweetness and joy of divine intoxication.* But to talk of "looking into the loving eyes" of "the dear God" —is that the decorous language of sober sense? Is it not rather the incontinent overflow of uninformed sentiment? Curious is it to see how deeply men can intoxicate themselves with a fine setting of melodious words which express

* *Hours of Thought*, Dr. MARTINEAU.

[illegible] delusions, but are pleasing discharges of vague and [illegible] motion.

[illegible] we are asked to receive intuition of this strained [illegible] with curious scientific interest as the palpitations [illegible] soul, but with reverence as the blessed privilege [illegible] superior nature and the revealing thrills of transcendent [illegible], we have the right to ask that those who enjoy and [illegible] should not, while using the word "God" in a sense [illegible] from and quite irreconcilable with the Christian [illegible] of it, steal the hallowed language and associations [illegible] feeling, and use them as if they used them in [illegible] and of the same God. They do not; they [illegible] and adore a much mutilated and entirely different [illegible], rightly or wrongly, and have no right to take and use [illegible] and sentiments of the true Christian. It is [illegible] like a Christian that which is not Christianity. [illegible] end one must needs own that divine intuition [illegible] the different thrills of different minds does not yield [illegible] but confusion and contradiction of beliefs: it has [illegible] property of falsity, that it is very various."*

A second question is whether, granting a human communion [illegible] by love working faith, man has the right to make [illegible] the inference of his own immortality. Does the [illegible] sustain the stupendous conclusion? For anything [illegible] that it warrants one way or the other it might be that [illegible] intimacy was granted to him for aid and comfort [illegible] the burden of his life on earth, and that the opinion of [illegible] through all eternity was no more than the [illegible] and expression of individual egoism. No doubt [illegible] persons would find it hard, and might not perhaps care, [illegible] if they had the complete certitude that there [illegible] after death for them and their kind; but ought not [illegible] to stir distrust of, rather than inspire trust in, the [illegible] such eternal life? Let them imitate the lover's [illegible] who adoring the more the more he is made to [illegible] would die to do his mistress a pleasure or to spare [illegible] a pang. Not Job's cry, "Though He slay me (now), yet [illegible] I trust Him," but the cry, "Though He slay me for

* Dr. SOUTH, in one of his sermons.

ever, yet will I trust Him," is the voice of supreme trust and love. That climax of supreme devotion cannot be reached but by a depersonalization of thought and feeling, which is virtual annihilation of self. Thus it comes to pass that man is only qualified to be immortal when, being depersonalized, extinct as a self, it is all one whatever the event. Is it not evident, then, that the certainty of individual immortality must be sought elsewhere than in the certitude of the individual heart?*

* "A hard and self-enclosed mind is destitute of the feeling that looks most intently on the future, and makes it most credible, because most urgently needed by us. . . . God would never launch so frail a vessel on so stormy a sea, where the roll of every wave may wreck us, were it not designed to float at length on serener waters and beneath gentler skies. . . . But all this the heart of the selfish can never know. . . . Thus selfishness, like sensuality, secretly conscious of ignobility, and interpreting by its own experience the whole race of human kind, stifles within us the Eternal Hope."

It is curious that the spiritualist discovers proof of his superior nature in what the cold and selfish materialist might argue to be the wail of egoism quailing before the prospect of its extinction, and therefore passionately urging to make most credible that which is most urgently desired. It is the more curious since it appears necessary to him to get as far as possible away from human nature, in order to be able to believe in its noble destiny.

"The spectator who, in the dingy cellar of the city, under the oppression of a narrow dwelling, watching the last moments of some poor mendicant, finds incongruity and perplexity in the thought of the eternal state, would feel the difficulty vanish in an instant were he transplanted to the mountain-top, where the plains and streams are beneath him, and the clouds are near him, and the untainted breeze of heaven sweeps by, and he stands alone with Nature and God."—*Endeavours after the Christian Life*, JAMES MARTINEAU.

In NEWMAN'S *Dream of Gerontius* occurs the following passionate wail of human weakness quailing before the prospect, or rather in the process, of dissolution, and clutching convulsively in its agony at a possible support in the fearful void:—

"Jesu Maria—I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now
. . . . . .
'T is death—O loving friends, your prayers! 't is he . . .
As though my very being had given way;
As though I was no more a substance now,
And could fall back on nought to be my stay;
(Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole refuge, Thou)—
And turn no whither, but must needs decay
And drop from out this universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,
That utter nothingness of which I came."

The feeling thus expressed is an organic effect of breeding and training; it is a Christian specialization of feeling produced by means of tradition, education, and custom of feeling from generation to generation. A good Buddhist or a good Mahometan could not have it, and would not if he could.

Certainly proof is still lacking to establish the validity of the method of direct personal relation with the supernatural through thrill of feeling: to demonstrate the ecstatic sentiment of personal union with God to be not illusive sentiment by which man is beguiled, but a way by which heaven is open to him on earth. An attitude of discreet reserve is the more just, seeing that the exposition of his relations with the supernatural through the ages has been the exposition of a succession of exploded illusions. The last surviving, still accredited, modes of communion therewith, are they any more trustworthy than the discredited and deserted modes of the past?

The pretensions of the method are certainly out of all proportion to its proved value. Its value at all, indeed, is in question; since it may be that, like so many supernatural theories of the past, its process is no more than a projection of self into the not-self and a deification there: the projection in this case not of an ordinary, but of an ecstatic self—that is to say, of a self which, having been brought by fit means and training into a sort of delirious haze of formless sentiment, creates an outward environing being answering to its qualities. For as the god of the Greek testified of the Greek, and the Roman god of the Roman, and the crook-kneed god of the South African testifies of its place of origin, and the gods of all people everywhere testify of them, so might the most abstract and rarefied intercourse with the Divine, were it also of human manufacture, testify of the intense spiritualization of the ecstatic rapture: if illusion, like every illusion of the kind, it will reflect the state of thought and feeling of the subject.

The finite can only express itself concerning the infinite in terms that are negations of definite conceptions: what would be the effect of suffusing these negations with the vague and hazy emotions which a conscious part feels in relation to an incomprehensible whole? The subjective state then produced, if projected into outward being in accordance with the well-known habit of the human mind, would it not take the character of divine being and divine communion? Have we to do with a strained subjective experience transformed

into objective being—in other words, the objectivation of a *psycholepsy*?*

* Man might justly be astonished, if not appalled, by his own measureless conceit could he reflect dispassionately on it. What but an amazing audacity of human egoism is it to infer that the unknown Power must be of the same quality as anything, even the best, which he discovers in himself or reckons the best in himself? He might logically, and as justly, infer that it must be also of the same quality as the worst which he discovers in himself. Because reason and moral feeling are essential factors in the social evolution of his kind, has he the right to suppose that the first principle of all that has been, is now, and ever shall be, must be of such poor human quality? And thereupon to declare these qualities in him to be of such surpassing excellence (though the mere rules and cement of his growing social fabric) that they must be perpetuated through eternity! A transient phenomenon between two eternities, past and to come, he virtually insists on peopling the eternal before-time and the eternal after-time with his qualities, and of making a supreme government, personal or impersonal, after the fashion of them. The theologian talks placidly of God as exerting power, concentrating attention, feeling compassion, and the like, and does not even suspect what blasphemous enormities he is saying. The Omnipotent in a state of exertion!

SECTION IV.

THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF ECSTATIC INTUITION.

HOW is any one, even the most highly favoured subject of a supernatural visitation, to be sure that it is objective reality, not subjective illusion? How can he safely say how much is verity, how much is vanity? He no doubt feels intensely sure; the beatific feeling is intrinsic proof to him; it supersedes and transcends all the processes of reason by which he ordinarily examines and certifies belief; infuses him with the thrill of an intuitive certainty. The strongest proofs of reason would add nothing to the overwhelming certitude; the strongest disproof of reason can take nothing from it. Nevertheless, it is possible he may be deceived; in his most ecstatic rapture he is still human, and it is human to err. That is the one certain thing in the uncertain business.

He has no right to exact from others, who have the right to demand credentials from him, a like absolute faith in the intuition of his ecstatic feeling; nor can he justly complain of their reserve in that respect, for any one who professes to be able, while still in the flesh, to coalesce with God sets up a pretension so large and extraordinary that he must be mad himself if he thinks he can challenge assent to it on the basis of his mere personal credit; who, moreover, in no other matter soars so high above his fellows as to be free from human temptation to deceive and human liability to err. Let a thousand persons come forward to declare with one consent that they have had similar experiences, not perhaps themselves reflecting how dissimilar the alleged similars actually were, the cumulative voice is still not cumulative proof; the multiplication of witnesses, even when they agree, adds nothing whatever to the

strength of the evidence so long as they all hang on the same weak link; a chain, however much lengthened by a multitude of links, being no stronger than the weakest link, and the weak or wanting link in the present case being the link to the supernatural.

If, on the one hand, the reality of the connection be in the nature of the case unprovable, as it certainly is, a great deal is done, on the other hand, in question or disproof of it, when it is shown that the experience deemed supernatural does not lie outside the natural laws of physiological function, but is entirely explicable in accordance with them. The assumption of a mysterious intervention then becomes *gratuitous* and *superfluous;* it is to evoke an unknown cause to do supernaturally that which a known cause is ready at hand to do naturally. Now it is confessedly bad philosophy to make such invocation.

When close enquiry is made into the mental constitutions of those who are most sure of a faculty of spiritual intuition, and exult most to have and use it, good reasons of doubt present themselves. They are not for the most part persons whose sagacity, character, and judgment one would trust in important matters of worldly concern, from which, indeed, their tastes and occupations commonly cut them off. That the facts of the spiritual world are more real to them than the facts of the natural world they think no disparagement, but a proof of superiority of nature; and they hug the belief that they possess a higher spiritual and a finer moral sense than those persons have who cannot attain to the supernatural illuminations in which they revel.

Two serious dangers to character are thence inevitable: first, that in straining wistfully to reach such spiritual heights they may, after all, strive astray for the unreal to the neglect of the real, and thus make themselves artificial and unwholesome beings; secondly, that their conceit of a superior moral nature, being founded on a thin and shrill egoism, may develop into Pharisaism, and all unawares render them self-deceivers and impostors. From their standpoint they see the matter in one light; but it may well appear in another light to the impartial observer who studies them and their lives

dispassionately from the outside simply as facts to be examined and taken account of, like other natural facts, in the formation of a scientific induction. For they cannot be allowed the privilege of sanctuary from critical appraisement because they reckon themselves pious persons pursuing pious ends. What induction do their lives and characters actually warrant in respect of superior sense and superior morality?

He who undertakes a frank and critical enquiry will not fail to note in many instances that those who experience these states of ecstatic coalescence with the Deity have what physicians know and describe as the neurotic temperament, and those who experience them most intensely have that temperament in its most intense degree; its special note being a spasmodic intensity and propensity. Thereby they are predisposed to extreme nervous exaltations which translate themselves into corresponding states of consciousness—into exaggerated, irregular, even perverted sensibilities; into similar exaltations, perversions, and scrupulosities of sentiment and thought before they undergo, and into sublimated states of spiritual ecstasy after they have undergone, the spiritual new birth or conversion by which they enter into communion with the Divine; sometimes into oddly nervous, perhaps even spasmodic or convulsive movements. The long and severe illness which St. Theresa had at the beginning of her religious career, when her body was contorted into a helpless bundle of pains and spasms, may have been a tremendous commotion of the nerves antecedent to or accompanying the opening of supernatural vision in her; but it was very like the commotion of nerves which a hysterical woman suffers at a particular season of natural development, without any sequent opening of a supernatural vision. Is the neurotic temperament of the physician's classification, then, identical with the spiritual temperament of the theologian's classification? And the ultraphysiological or positively pathological outcome of it in ecstatic function just as spiritual and material in the one case as in the other? If so, the exultation that the facts of the spiritual are more real than the facts of the material world means no more than that the internal experience is more vivid because it has escaped from its

rational restraints, being the effect and exponent of nerve-tracts in quasi-spasmodic action—of mind out of joint.

There is no doubt that so-called swoons or trances or cataleptic seizures befall from time to time persons of a susceptible nervous temperament, especially during the development of the reproductive functions; that such seizures are more easily provoked when the way of them has been made easy by frequent repetitions, so much so that they may then take place at any moment and on the least occasion; that they are attended with a strain of exalted feeling and thought which follows the habit of feeling and thought most nurtured by the individual before their occurrence, whether this has been of spiritually loving or lustful character; that under the delirious strain of feeling the natural consciousness of time and space is much modified, sometimes apparently abolished—as such *formal* conditions of thought must be by dislocations of their mental *forms;* and that all the outward and visible features of these attacks are exactly like those of the nervous seizures which were supposed at one time to bespeak possession by the god, and in some quarters are still thought to be the special means and occasions of divine infusion.

It will suffice here to refer to the varieties of these remarkable seizures—ecstatic, cataleptic, hysteric, hystero-epileptic, and, when induced artificially, hypnotic or mesmeric—without going into a detailed delineation of them. They will be found described at length in their proper places in medical treatises on nervous and mental pathology.* Their general features briefly are—faint, incomplete, almost extinguished consciousness of surroundings; absorption of mind in one strain of purely internal activity, with corresponding strain of vague delirious feeling; insusceptibility, partial or complete, to external impressions; more or less complete abeyance of movement, the muscles of the body or of a part of it being relaxed, or rigidly contracted, or convulsed; acceleration in many cases, in some cases marked lowering, in extreme cases almost suspension, of the organic functions of respiration and circulation.

* For such exposition of the more morbid features of mental disorders I may refer to my work on *The Pathology of Mind: a study of its Distempers, Deformities, and Disorders.* Second edition. (Macmillan and Co., 1895.)

For the time being there is an abeyance of the individual, mental and bodily, as regards his external life of relation; he is, as it were, detached from and dead to the world—whether he is in the body or out of the body he cannot say; but he is not dead wholly, seeing that his organic functions go on at a lowered rate of activity, like those of a hybernating animal, and that his consciousness is absorbed in a purely internal strain of disjointed activity—in a special ecstasy.*

Naturally, when he comes to himself he can give no account, in the terms of the language of normal experience, of the singular state of abnormal consciousness in which he was during his ecstasy. Being unlike anything which he ever felt or thought before, it is indescribable in terms of his experience; cannot really be recalled to memory on return to his life of relation, since its very existence means the absence of relations, and to recall it exactly would be to repeat it; impossible to be spoken of, except in terms of negation, as something *in*definite, *in*explicable, *in*finite, *in*comprehensible, *in*effable. It stands out from the normal mental life just as a convulsion stands out from the normal bodily life. No wonder, then, that he thinks more than natural, and styles supernatural, a mysterious condition of things which puts him for the time being so incomprehensibly out of himself. No wonder, again, that he is tempted to see in its rapture a sweet prelibation of the abolition of self and final absorption into the infinite, which is the ambitious goal of these convulsive strainings after a spiritual life. But what will become of consciousness in the end when they have attained their crown and consummation? The consciousness appertaining to the final absorption must in logical issue be a consciousness expanded, attenuated, and sublimed into unconsciousness. A complete detachment from, can have no part in, things of earth.

These ecstasies of thought and feeling are easily provoked in persons who, susceptible by nature, have increased their natural susceptibility by practice; the nervous functions falling easily into the habits of their exercise, and very easily

* It is in connection with such states that the so-called miraculous stigmata appear sometimes. (See note at the end of Part II.)

into bad habits of exercise in neurotic temperaments, because their innate tendencies are to go off the track: dislocations of mind, like dislocations of body, become easy by practice.

When mind was viewed as a simple, uncompounded, spiritual unity, acting always as a whole in every function of it, such disintegrate states could not well be conceived otherwise than as the work of god or demon which had taken possession of it and constrained it to extranatural displays of function; but now that the mental functions are known to be inseparably connected with nervous substrata disposed and united in the brain in the most orderly fashion, superordinate, co-ordinate, and subordinate—the whole a complex organization of confederate nerve-centres, each capable of more or less independent action—a natural interpretation presents itself. The extraordinary states of mental disintegration evince the separate and irregular function of certain mental nerve-tracts or groups of nerve-tracts, with which goes necessarily a coincident suspension, partial or complete, of the functions of all the rest: the supernatural incubus, therefore, neither demonic nor divine, only morbid. Thus the strange nervous seizures with their mental concomitants, not being outside the range of positive research, but interesting events within it, become useful natural experiments to throw an instructive light upon the intricate functions of the most complex organ in the world—the human brain. Steadily are the researches of pathology driving the supernatural back into its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that in the extremest ecstasies there is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of possession of the individual by an external power: what there is truly is a *psycholepsy*.*

* A term one may, perhaps, propose for use as fairly denominating a class of phenomena which call for further and more exact investigation. Several varieties might be formulated and described. For example—

I. Psycholepsy:

(*a*) Theological illumination or ecstasy.
(*b*) Metaphysical intuition or ecstasy.
(*c*) Catalepsy and its allied trances.
(*d*) Fanatical transport of enthusiasm or of fury.
(*e*) Frenzy of epidemic emotion.
(*f*) Fascination of fear.
(*g*) Ecstasy of gross brain-disease.

This dissolution of mental unity produced by the separate and irregular action of one or more of the numerous and diverse nerve-centres or nerve-tracts which make up the complex unity of the brain has more than an immediate pathological interest. In the first place, such disordinate function is usually the outcome of an innate tendency that way; it is the individual's evil heritage from a line of ancestral development wanting in solidarity and thorough wholesomeness of character. Secondly, the mental outcome of such want of solidarity, when well marked, is a lack of wholesome unity and veracity of nature in him; he is never thoroughly at one with himself or in sincere and consistent relations with other persons and things. He is prone to be impressionable, mobile, fluctuating, inconstant in thought and feeling. Engrossed in the present current of thought and feeling, to which he gives effusive expression, he makes an impression of genuineness and sincerity which is not proportionately justified in the issue; for when the train of activity has subsided and been replaced by another train of thought and feeling, in which he is equally engrossed for the time, he is just as earnest and effusive about it, although it be of an almost opposite character, as he was about the former one which he cannot now perhaps realize that he ever felt. Each current reaches such a separate and intemperate, if not distempered, strain as to be out of proportion or tempered relation with the rest of the mental functions; it cannot therefore be recalled adequately by the mind when quiet, or be recalled at all by it when engaged in action of an opposite kind. Lack of sincerity, solidity, and unity of character is the natural, direct, and inevitable result. The individual cannot trust himself, because he is never sure what is himself; and for the same reason he cannot help being equally suspicious and distrustful of others, who in turn necessarily fail, if constant and veracious themselves, to stay in definite relations with one so mobile, fluctuating, and inconstant. Suspicion and guile are a sort of natural protection, as they are a natural consequence, of constitutional infirmity of mental structure; for cunning is the natural defence of weakness, and every creature has the instinct to use its natural means of defence.

There is this further consequence of his transient intensities of feeling: being so extremely vivid they are quite as real to him when they have not adequate objective causes as they are when they are truly motived in external impressions; he cannot therefore distinguish between imaginations and facts. That which he has vividly thought and felt, be it only the particular littleness of a little mind, is fact for him; the more intense *his* experience, the more keen is his sense of *its* reality and the duller his sense of real facts. Moreover, as every train of thought and feeling has a natural affinity for impressions which favour, and an aversion from impressions which favour not, its being and growth, he easily sees good reasons for his belief, sees not the good reasons against it, and is capable of the most inconsistent conduct, according to the train of thought and feeling in the ascendant, without realizing the inconsistency at the time or being troubled by the memory of it afterwards. The one consistent thing is the unconscious self beneath the several inconsistent conscious selves; and what that is the history of his life best shows.

This sort of loose mental temperament—really unsound in so far as it lacks sense of proportion and unity of being—is often a result of insanity or allied disorder in the stock, and tends to end in further degeneration of the offspring. The character of the function betrays the frailty of the mental constitution; it is the explicit discharge in work of that which is implicit potentially in structure. Moreover, as structuralization follows the lines of function in the order of organic development, it is proof of bad antecedent exercise and development some time or other in the ancestral line.

Two principles may be laid down as legitimate inferences—first, *that of inference from the nature of the function to the nature of the organ or structure;* second, *that of inference from the kind of function displayed by the structure to the kind of function which prevailed during and was embodied in its organization.* An ill-constructed machine means ill-conceiving in the making of it and ill-doing in its function: a fact just as true of the human brain, where the working power

is within, as it is of a machine made from without. The individual brain is virtually the embodiment of a long series of memories; wherefore everybody, in the main lines of his thoughts, feelings, and conduct, recalls and relives essentially the experiences of his forefathers, albeit differently because in relation to different surroundings.

SECTION V.

THEOLOGICAL ILLUMINATION.

PASSING from nervous seizures plainly morbid and from the lessons which they teach, it remains only to consider the nature and value of the latest, best-attested, least-questioned mode of communion with the supernatural—that is, the immediate and actual intuition of God through love of Him. At once the question arises how it is possible for a concrete and finite being, so minute in space and so fleeting in time, to have a real feeling of love for an infinite and eternal Spirit. The love of the natural man plainly demands an objective being in order to be kindled: something with substance and form, more tangible than an infinite Spirit which, although present everywhere, is nowhere visible or anywise sensible, which cannot be conceived in thought, and with which it is a contradiction in thought to suppose the concrete to be in relations. Love in relation to such an impersonal absolute is love in name only, it has no substance of meaning. How pray for help in time of need to an abstraction of negations? *

In order to evoke real feeling in the mind it has been found necessary to represent the Divine in a personal form—as a personal God directly governing the world who concerns himself with the creatures in it and to whom their prayers and praises may be addressed. Yet an infinite personality is not really a consistent notion to the natural understanding; it is a contradiction in thought and in terms, something like a square circle or a finite infinite; for it is impossible to conceive a

* The Lord's prayer being of a personal application, the cry of a feeble child to its strong Father in Heaven—what meaning could it have if addressed to an impersonal abstraction?

personality except under forms of space and time, under which, if infinite and eternal, it cannot be. And how is it possible to love and adore and pray to that which, not coming under the conditions of thought, is inconceivable? This, then, is the unavoidable and awkward dilemma—that, in order to love the infinite it must be personal, and in order to make the personal infinite it must be divested of personality. To the natural man, therefore, the joy of direct internal communion with God is impossible; in order to reach that height of love he must undergo the strange spiritual transformation by which, transcending for the occasion the bounds of personality, he is rapt out of himself. The insoluble problem necessitates two incomprehensible and inconsistent solutions: first, to depersonalize self in order to merge into union with the infinite; secondly, to personalize the infinite in the magnified image of self in order to be into relations with it.

So it has come to pass that there has been a sort of flux and reflux in the human mind through the later ages of its development. Having risen to the conception of a spiritual and infinite unity men could not stay in that refined abstraction; they demanded intermediate agents or mediators to bring them into relations with the infinite; with the natural and invariable result that the mediators then became the objects of devotion, from whom the declension was gradual to idolatry more and more gross until the grossness of the corruption was such as to provoke a reaction towards purity.* Those who look on idols of wood and stone as gross superstition do not always stay to reflect that idols are mental as well as material, and that an image of the imagination is essentially a mental idol.

Is, then, the ecstatic love of God which he feels who undergoes the required spiritual transport a genuine state with objective meaning, or is it a mere nervous state with

* It was to guard against this tendency that Jews and Mahometans forbade the introduction of statues and pictures into their temples. And although the Greek Church excludes statues, any one who has watched the antic postures of a Russian peasant crossing and prostrating himself repeatedly before the pictures of the holy shrines, as he stops on his way past them to perform his mechanical devotions, might well think that it would have been well had pictures been excluded also.

the counterfeit of such meaning? Is the strain of exaltation a subjective dupery owing to a physical process of self-magnetism,* or is it the divine effect of a supernatural infusion? That it is induced voluntarily by dwelling with exclusive concentration of thought and feeling on the divine nature and attributes is in conformity with the experience of those who bring on the so-called mesmeric or hypnotic state by concentrating the attention on a single object until they suffer a kind of fascination, as also with the modes in which St. Theresa and other saints achieved their trance-like states of ecstatic rapture. It is certain that a state of special nervous exaltation very like the state of divine ecstasy can be evoked without any other than a simple physical significance; certain also that the disposition of mind studiously invoked and stimulated in order to evoke the divine ecstasy is that best fitted to induce the purely physical state. In no sense is the actual state counterfeit; it is a genuine neurosis, however it be produced and however its accompanying psychosis be interpreted.

Furthermore, a similar nervous ecstasy can be produced experimentally by the use of certain stimulating drugs and vapours. A person may drug as well as think himself into the transcendent rapture. One of the effects of opium, which is the temptation to its habitual use and abuse, is the pleasing state of exaltation of thought and feeling which it engenders in those persons of imaginative temperament who are specially susceptible to its effects: it imparts a genial warmth to the whole being, suffusing the heart with expansive sentiments, stimulating the imagination to ethereal flights, giving large and lofty sweep to the projects of the intellect —necessarily, however, without corresponding power of will to execute them—and even expanding the natural forms of thought by easing or removing the restricting bonds of time and space and conditions. The sense of individual separateness from things seems to dissolve, and the personality to melt into a diffusive oneness with them. The terms of ordinary mental experience are inadequate to describe the expansion of thought and feeling; time, as De Quincey says, lengthens

* To use what I believe is an expression of Coléridge's in his *Table Talk*.

to infinity and space swells to immensity; causality is sublimed into intuition of the relations of things; and other necessary forms of thought seem to fall away from the released mind, or to be so stretched out as to be scarcely sensible to it. Such is the feeling of freedom from the bondage of facts, and such the spacious sense of expansion and well-being that, were the cause of the transport not known, it would certainly be thought to mark an entrance into a higher spiritual sphere.

The exaltation is of the same kind as that mental ignition which in olden times went before or along with the prophetic rapture, and in modern times usually goes before an attack of acute mania; it is the result of a break of the equilibrium between the individual and his surroundings by reason of an over-stimulated self, which, soaring above the level and forms of its habitual adjustments, is then thrilled with a strange and illusive sense of transcendent power and freedom. As usual, when there is the least will there is the strongest conviction of its freedom. But the mortal is compelled, like St. Augustine, sadly to confess that it is a state which he cannot keep up, that it is too heavenly to last on earth; he must fall back from its lofty beatitude despite his utmost strain of desire; and, however high he may soar out of his normal relations, impartial lookers-on perceive plainly that he does not soar above the natural world.

A still more acute sense of intense mental illumination is produced in some minds by the inhalation of nitrous oxide gas, commonly known as laughing-gas. This stimulating effect was experienced by Sir Humphry Davy, who, when he first inhaled it, was astonished at the apparent exaltation of his mental powers, whereby difficulties of thought seemed to vanish as by magic and no subject too difficult of comprehension. A recent writer on metaphysical mental philosophy has recorded a similar experience. On him the effect was, he says, a "tremendously exciting sense of an intense metaphysical illumination," the first result of which was to make peal through him with unutterable power the conviction that Hegelism was true. It was "a perfect delirium of theoretic rapture," the characteristic feature of which was "the

identification of opposites."* By suitable physical agencies the nervous system can be put into a state in which the identification of opposites or any similar nonsense is accomplished with the same perfect ease and delight as in dreams—at any rate, by a mind aspiring to such heights of thoughts beyond thought; but when the induced state is past the identification is past also and the opposites remain as before. It is just as it is with the man who, having communed with God in a spiritual ecstasy, communes with men afterwards without showing any effects of so transcendent an experience—for not now, as aforetime, are marks of the divine converse seen in a luminous afterglow of face and thoughts; just too as it is with the dreamer who wakes to find the sublimity of the dream to be inanity. The neurosis past, the corresponding psychosis passes also.

Like intoxicating effects upon the mental functions of the brain are produced by other substances, notably by haschisch, but it is not necessary here to enter into a description of the several effects. Having set forth two plain facts—the physical origin and basis of the state of mental transport in some instances, and the natural production of the physical state by a process of mental induction, the question is whether the state of spiritualization during which the subject is rapt from himself in a divine intuition, although more than ordinary, is ever more than natural.† The individual's certitude of the transcendent experience goes for nothing in the matter;

* The reference, which I have lost, is to an article which appeared some time ago in the journal called *Mind*.

In the *British Medical Journal* (December 5th, 1896) Dr. Weir Mitchell describes the effects on himself of a full dose of *mescal*, a vegetable extract used by the Indians of New Mexico to increase their physical endurance. He felt himself more competent mentally and bodily: to be able to exert himself without sense of effort and to deal victoriously with problems. On trial, however, he found that what he did was neither better nor worse than the average, notwithstanding his elated sense of superior capacity.

† This is how one of the latest and most accomplished writers speaks of the spiritual intoxication in himself, and of its pernicious effects: "Il me faut un effort pour me repaisir, pour m'affirmer et me personnaliser. L'abîme m'attire, m'entraîne toujours. L'infini me tente, le mystère me fascine, l'unification, l'*hénose* de Plotin m'enivre comme un philtre. C'est mon opium, mon haschisch." *Henri Frédéric Amiel*, vol. i. p. 89.

And again: "Je comprends la volupté bouddique des Soufis, le kief des Turcs,

it is no greater than that of the mediæval saint who had in her raptures actual visions of God and talked familiarly with Him; while the consent of others is but the consent of those who have inherited the same theological traditions, learned the same special doctrines, breathed the same atmosphere of religious sentiment, observed the same rites of worship, and assiduously trained their nervous systems to the same habits of exercise. How then can these, when put into a fit transport by practice of the fit means, fail to perform similar transcendent feelings and thoughts of spiritual illumination. The light is not light from heaven by which the person sees things more clearly; it is blinding light which prevents the forms of things from being seen at all. Neither his own intense certitude nor the unanimous assent of others like-minded ought to be allowed to stand in the way of a strictly scientific study of the phenomena, nor of a natural explanation of them if one can be had.

To obtain the unqualified assent which it challenges supernatural intuition needs a guarantee of authenticity. And whence can that guarantee come but from infallible authority? And where is such authority to be found elsewhere than in the Roman Catholic Church, whose fundamental principle it is to accept the definitions and declarations of its head in matters of faith as infallible? The fundamental principles of Protestantism, on the other hand, are the self-sufficingness of inspired Scripture, without any authority to say how far the inspiration goes; the right of private judgment in its interpretation, be the judgment never so weak, shallow, bigoted, or fatuous; and the authority of individual consciences, though consciences are as many and various as individuals: all which amounts simply to the consecration of anarchy. Nothing can be more flagrant than the contrast between Protestant licence of thought and the indispensable and elementary postulate of the Catholic faith to hold true all that the Church teaches or shall at any future time teach; to acknowledge

l'extase des Orientaux. Et pourtant je sens aussi que cette volupté est léthifère, qu'elle est, comme l'usage de l'opium et du haschisch, un suicide lent; qu'elle est inférieure d'ailleurs à la joie d'énergie, à la douceur de l'amour, à la beauté de l'enthousiasme, à la saveur sacrée du devoir accompli.". (*Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 132.)

the right function of reason in all matters of faith to be to reason itself into assent, even though it be to its own stultification; to make it the one resolute aim so completely to impregnate the mind with the truth of the Catholic religion as that belief shall become a matter not of rational conviction, but of direct sensibility and immediate assent. "The Catholic religion is true because it has about it an odour of truth and sanctity, *sui generis*, as perceptible to my moral nature as flowers to my sense, such as can only come from heaven": true because it smells fragrant to feeling.*

The process is simple and, when thorough, effective. It is a process of organic manufacture—to mould the nature patiently and diligently into organic conformity with all the requirements of a particular system of religious belief and practice, by exclusive devotion of thought, feeling, and conduct to its service in a fit mental medium. When that has been done thoroughly—and it may be done certainly, if the work of moulding be begun early enough and continued long enough, man being a plastic organism—the proof that it has been well done will be that the particular system of religion is known to be true by direct feeling; for it will then exhale an odour of truth and sanctity as perceptible to the fitly moulded nature as flowers to smell. As always, the habit-formed structure will respond to its proper stimulus and feel the joy of discharging its special function. How indeed could it physically do otherwise?

Assuming the infallible end and pursuing assiduously the fit means to attain it, the desired effect will certainly follow in due time; and without doubt a similar effect would follow the assiduous pursuit of similar means of persistent mental moulding in relation to any other system of religion which was not infallibly true to begin with. It is pretty certain that a person might in like manner, by a fit process of exclusive training, so fashion his nature as to render it capable of finding sublime intuition and ravishing ecstasy in the rapt contemplation of a decimal fraction.†

* *Grammar of Assent*, p. 212.

† Note how eagerly the acute legal intellect, well trained in the subtilties of its work, fastens on "nice points of law," and with what joy it goes into endless consideration and discussion of them, without the most learned judges,

The terms *ecstasy* and *rapture*, which are in use to describe the extraordinary mental transport, are instructive when they are traced back to their origin and etymological meaning. *Ecstasy* means literally a standing out of self (ἔκ στάσις), and *rapture* the state of one who is rapt or carried away from himself; and inasmuch as the soul was the self, there was nothing for it in olden times but to presume that this was done by a supernatural power, divine or diabolic, which had taken possession of it. The original meaning of the terms has still a large measure of applicability if the theory be true that a certain order of nerve-tracts is thrown into a state of ultra-physiological activity, of almost delirious or convulsive character, in which they are cut off from functional connections with their associated nerve-tracts; standing out, in a rapt function, they are thereby severed from the ordinary operations of reason and will which, as consciousness is absorbed in the ecstasy, are suspended. The ravishing feeling of the supernatural influx is the effect and exponent of the ravished nerve-tract. Transported out of self during the function the individual is not himself, but a partial or disintegrate self. The effect is physiologically natural and necessary; the exclusive activity of a particular order of nerve-tracts must be a disruption or dissolution of the mental self for the time being, just as the convulsion of a limb is a temporary disruption of the bodily self as a physiological unity.

When the disintegration is past and the individual returns to his integrate self, he does not exhibit much trace of his extranatural experience. How can he now when he is himself, not the other and translated self? The more intense and delirious the spiritual ecstasy, the more completely does it

after long conferences in solemn conclave, ever being able to arrive at a common conclusion; notwithstanding that the natural conclusion may appear to ordinary common sense "as plain as way to parish church," or, if not that, not to be arrived at by discussion lasting till doomsday. Fourteen English judges, after long argument and grave deliberation, have lately been unable to decide whether a man who, having asked the loan of a shilling, received by mistake a sovereign, and refused to give it, or nineteen shillings, back when they were demanded of him, was guilty of larceny; and if not, what he was guilty of. How the momentous question was solved I cannot say; perhaps it remains one of the great unresolved mysteries of the universe, like the identity of the writer of the *Letters of Junius*, and of the man in the Iron Mask.

stand outside his ordinary life and character as an event apart. He may be compared to one who, having been in a hypnotic or an epileptic state of abnormal consciousness, forgets nearly or entirely, when he comes to himself, all that he thought and felt during it, or at best remembers it dreamily and remotely only as having happened to a self so estranged as not to seem his. It is no surprise, therefore, that those who undergo these heroic ecstasies are not more holy than other persons: not more patient, sincere, self-denying, and habitually considerate for others in the prosaic struggles and trials of daily life. The simple truth is that they usually show less disciplined self-control, less quiet self-renunciation, less patient forbearance, less prudent foresight, and less store of the homely virtues which, not suiting the lofty exaltations of the spiritual temperament, nevertheless make the daily happiness of others. Occupied with the habitual strain of self to its high-aspiring function, and debauched by their delirium of delight, they neglect the proper cultivation of its humble relations to the not-self, social and material; and the more readily because such modest training consists not with the ambitious functions they affect. In the end the spiritual intoxication to which they give themselves up is a perilous or pernicious form of self-indulgence which stealthily saps and wastes moral fibre; not otherwise than as the baneful practice of mesmeric, hypnotic, and so-called spiritualistic trances disintegrates the moral energy and will of those who give themselves up to it, loosening the federal union of mental centres and leading towards badness or madness.

In face of the claim to superfine spiritual sense and moral feeling made by persons who profess and practise divine intoxication, it is right to take strict scientific account of their lives and characters simply as facts of observation, in order to judge how far these verify their pretensions. The facts do not verify the pretensions; all that they verify is the intensity of a tender self-love. So far from being more holy, either in its original sense of more healthy or wholesome, or in its later sense of more moral or sacred, than those who make no such claim, and thus giving tangible proof of their pretensions, such persons do not rise above, often fall below,

the average level of goodness in sincerity and solidity of character, in decent consideration for others, in quiet self-suppression, in manly reticence of feeling, in sound judgment of men and things, in wise conduct of life. Their narrow imaginations, inspired by keen self-conceit, attend only to mood-agreeing points, which they exaggerate and embellish, and ignore qualifying or disagreeing evidence; the sufficient justification of an alleged fact being that it accords with the present mood of feeling, the sufficient refutation of it that it does not. They eagerly embrace any evidence, however bad, to prove what is pleasing, impatiently reject every evidence, however good, which disproves what is pleasing or proves what is displeasing. To be illogical, or above logic, is the special note and privilege of their superior nature as members of a moral aristocracy. Essentially, however unconsciously, they are for the most part unstable and untrustworthy. As their histories—the true exponents of their characters—prove, it would go badly with the affairs of the world did not other persons of sounder sense, better judgment, less selfish indulgence of sentiment, and greater veracity of nature make social atonement for their egoistic altruisms. Nowise incompatible are the qualities of knave and fanatic; on the contrary, they sometimes go very lovingly together in the same person.*

Without doubt individuals among them sometimes deserve great moral credit for persistent and painstaking endeavours, by straining after spiritual illumination, consciously to avoid the inconstancies and unveracities of thought and feeling into which it is the bent of their peculiarly constructed minds,

* Even when they shut themselves up in convents or monasteries, or in their closets, in order to pursue an undistracted spiritual life, and thus escape in their sheltered solitude from the manifold occasions of suffering and doing afforded by a worldly life—from the duties that subordinate self and the trials that make strong—their "cloistered virtue" has not fibre enough to support them against the petty miseries to which they are exposed; they become meanly and miserably dependent upon their little interests and occupations and comforts, singularly exacting of what they deem themselves entitled to, and irritably impatient of any disturbance of their habits. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose the convent or monastery to be the peaceful abode of virtuous serenity; all the ordinary passions of human nature are seething there, and, being without scope for free exercise, they are liable to be engaged in small jealousies, petty interests, mean intrigues, trivial objects, and artificial gratifications.

predisposed to delirious ecstacies of thought and feeling, to plunge them; but for them, as for others, it is impossible to eradicate nature, whose fundamental note of frailty is a want of thorough unity and balance of mental constitution. Just therefore is the scruple to accept the intuitive certitude of their sentiment as indisputable, whose opinions in all other relations of life are very disputable; just, too, the reason which holds the common sense of the race, in a matter open to common experience, to be much more trustworthy than the uncommon sense which they affect. Their superfine spiritual sense is often nothing more than the shrinking of a sensitive nature from looking facts sincerely in the face and truly assimilating them; its eager escape from their rude realism into the gratification of strains of idealism, be they ever so thin and unsubstantial, just the timid retreat of a tender self-love from the shock of facts to the shelter of faith or prejudice.

It may be better for a person of that sort of temperament to go out in delirious tracts of theological feeling than to go astray in other sorts of delirium, as he might else do; yet it is none the less a fundamental fault of his nature to be under the vicarious necessity. At the best they are pernicious not wholesome, for they mean an internal stimulation of function without adequate external objective; a stimulation which being a kind of intoxication, exhilarating enough while it lasts, is hurtful in the end. It is a repugnant example of the kind of unwholesome function of which hysteria exhibits still more flagrant morbid instances.

The solid test of wholesome feeling is its capability of expenditure in good thought and action. Not the laboured thinking of high thoughts, nor the forced feeling of fine feelings, nor the tortured ingenuity to express them in strains of elaborate eloquence, but the thinking and doing definitely for his kind it is which best develops sympathetic feelings and human instincts of a manly and wholesome type. The effect of the habitual indulgence of emotion divorced from activity, or in excess of the proper activity, is self-deception and hypocrisy, conscious or unconcious; it is egoistic intoxication masquerading as altruistic emotion, with an incapacity

of corresponding self-sacrifice in conduct. The preacher who spends effusive emotion in strains of elaborately concocted eloquence actually demoralizes his understanding. To act well in thoroughly adaptive reflex function to the social environment is the right way to keep sensibilities and feelings in due bounds and proportion; for just as doing imparts real meaning to language, which without it is apt to be vague, confused, and equivocal, so it compresses and utilizes, in order to form fruit, the emotional energy whose unrestrained tendency is to run into luxuriant display of empty rhetoric, of which comes little or no fruit in homely good works, but, instead, much talk of self-denial along with incontinent self-abuse of sentiment. Is *uninformed* emotion any better really than uninformed understanding? frenzy of feeling worth more than frenzy of thought?

All this one may devoutly believe without the smallest expectation that people will leave off gratifying themselves with the excessive stimulation of emotion and the outpouring of it in answering wails and cries and shrieks; or that they will cease to inflame it through the infection of numbers undergoing a similar self-enkindling process — such contagious increase as the many and absurd epidemics of fanaticism and superstition in the past, affecting whole bodies of people, witness to.* Like-built nervous molecules beneath like minds, when discharged, transmit the explosion easily and quickly from one to another, just as the explosion of one grain of gunpowder instantly fires another near it.

If there is one thing demonstrated by the history of man on earth it is the avidity which he has shown to use intoxicants of one kind or another wherever he had the chance. Indeed, it is curious to see that while the nations of the past, savage, barbarous or fairly civilized, showed everywhere a remarkable ingenuity in the invention and construction of weapons and other means to hurt and kill one another, they did little or nothing anywhere to discover the medicinal substances useful to cure their injuries and diseases; and not less curious to note that the only substances of the kind which most of them did discover were such as created

* See note at end of section.

a momentary kingdom of illusive bliss by stimulating the passions of mind and body—intoxicants and aphrodisiacs. The delight of being transported into the realm of idealism, of supplementing the pessimism of facts by the optimism of theory, has been an eternal temptation to the race, and will no doubt continue to beguile it in one form or other to the end.*

Meanwhile, what privileges of nature have the delirious feelings and imaginations which some persons deliberately generate by a process of self-magnetization or of so-called spiritual ecstasy over the delirious feelings and imaginations into which others deliberately drug themselves? The artificial privilege of birth they may have, other privilege they have none. The hunt after spiritual is perhaps not in the end any more laudable than the hunt after bodily intoxicants and aphrodisiacs.

Several examples of infectious emotion will be found related in HECKER'S *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*. Similar epidemics occur still from time to time. In July, 1885, at the village of Corano, near Piacenza, in Italy, a little girl of eleven years of age saw on the mountain road a most beautiful lady, dressed in blue, who informed her that she was the Madonna. She then disappeared, but a few hours afterwards all Corano had learnt what the girl had seen. This was what thereupon ensued, according to the correspondent of the *Times* newspaper—

"Some were incredulous, but the greater number did not for a moment discuss the veracity of the girl's statement. Desolina was hailed as the favourite child of the Madonna, and the whole population went out in procession to the spot at the entrance of the wood. From that moment there commenced a literal epidemic of ecstasies and visions. While I write more than thirty little girls declare that they have seen and are in direct communication with the Madonna. To these are added men and women, young and old, married and single. For miles round this village the country has the appearance of the Tuscan Maremma at the time of the unfortunate prophet of Arcidosso, David Lazzaretti. Hanging from the branches of the trees and on the hedges on all sides are offerings presented by the peasants to the miraculous shrine, which at present consists of a basket, draped with three or four cloths, on the roadside, to the right, as you proceed towards Corano.

"Hundreds and hundreds of persons are seen labouring up the steep ascent, under the burning rays of the July sun. Some girls scramble up the bare rocks,

* How can it be otherwise? Though reason prove life to be vanity of vanities and not worth living, yet organic life, liking to live, will insist on living as long as it can, and will therefore inspire the imagination to gild life with the bright hues of desire. Is it not a glimpse of the ideal which gives value enough to life to make it worth living?

supplicating the Virgin with loud cries to appear, until they faint with fatigue. Recovering their senses, they say that they hear the voice of the Madonna, while all present fall on the ground, kissing the earth, with convulsive sobs and floods of tears. A profound impression is produced. To aggravate matters, women known to be hysterical sing, laugh, and cry, causing others to imitate them. While I write this thousands are thronging hither from the valleys of the old Duchies, from Piedmont, from Liguria, from Lombardy. The number is estimated at sixteen thousand.

"The authorities are now interfering, and it is high time. Several doctors who have visited the place declare that the spread of this hallucination is likely to assume very alarming proportions."

SECTION VI.

ISOLATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

IF what I have said thus far be true, it is no surprise that progress in understanding of things material and temporal, and progress in the revelation of things spiritual and eternal, have not gone along together: so plainly antagonistic and mutually exclusive the principles of the two methods that, unless they keep entirely aloof, the issue of their conflict must be the inevitable subjection of the one to the other. Theological systems are avowedly based not on what men know, but on what they know not nor can know by sense and reason. The revolutions of them which have come to pass in the world at different times have therefore been independent of the understanding, which they did not improve, and often of the character too. Those who embraced the new faith were not made wiser, even when they were made better by it. To take one example: however much there may be to esteem in the character and conduct of the great leader of the Protestant Reformation—and one large class of Christians find nothing at all to approve in him—no one now can admire the bigoted ignorance with which he clung to his barbarous and cruel notions concerning witches and their doings, and the gross inhumanity to them which he vehemently advocated. "I would have no pity on these witches; I would burn them all," he says. Following his teachings in that respect, and the higher teaching of the commandment to Moses, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," the Protestants and Puritans of old and new England, in the tortures and deaths which they inflicted on poor wretches suspected or accused of witchcraft, contributed a hideously revolting and humiliating chapter to the annals of human cruelty and folly.

So it was: a mighty revolution of religious thought and

feeling, springing from a revolt against idolatry and superstition, without the least solvent effect upon a superstition so vile and silly that it has always been the degrading scourge of savage and barbarous peoples. Nay, so far from the effect being to weaken, it was to strengthen, the horrible superstition; for it was in the name of God and in pious zeal for His honour and glory that the bloody persecution was undertaken and carried relentlessly through.* That was the proof of earnest Christianity then which would be thought the negation of Christianity now; for it now prudently disowns the barbarities which it instigated and credits itself with the humane progress which it strenuously resisted. Ample proof, were proof necessary, how entirely a revolution of thought along theological lines may stand apart from any improvement of the understanding and conduct generally: the two things as far aloof and as little akin as if they belonged to differently constituted inhabitants of different planets.

But a still more impressive and illustrious example might be cited in evidence. Reflect how rudely Christianity went its independent way in the insolent vigour of its youth and prime, abandoning contemptuously the priceless acquisitions of philosophy, science, and art which had been slowly made by the successive labours of the best intellects of Greece and Rome, and initiating dark ages of intellectual barbarism. It was in resolute defiance of its resolute hostility that knowledge struggled slowly and painfully into existence again after a long submergence; for during the intellectual eclipse which prevailed from the rise of Christianity to the modern revival of learning, while it exercised full sway over the minds of Western nations, there was not alone a suspension of intellectual growth, but a degradation of understanding reaching in many respects to the depths of barbarism.† Nor was there,

* It is impossible to estimate the appalling amount of suffering from witch-persecution due to the Bull of Innocent VIII. sanctioning and stimulating it.

† All the more audacious, therefore, that while every gain of knowledge was made in spite and defiance of its blind hostility it should now claim the credit for the progress in science which it has persistently, and in humanity which it has frequently, opposed: the intellectual and moral horrors of the Inquisition and of kindred engines of ruthless persecution and torture belong to Christianity —that is, to the Christianity without Christ which Christianity since Christ has for the most part been.

perhaps, any equal period in human history in which among an equal number of people more wars were undertaken, more blood shed, more tortures inflicted, more sufferings endured; at any rate, not any period in which so many horrors were practised in the name of a gospel of peace and goodwill among men. So little had a revolution of thought in relation to the supernatural to do with furthering the growth of man's natural understanding. Religion, indeed, is one thing and theological systems are another thing; and so far from religion resting on any theology it has struggled for life and lived in spite of the crushing burdens of successive theologies.

With the race as with the individual, then, a theological theory is something in the air. For the most part it stands aloof from the normal life and is without good effect upon the understanding and conduct; its solid benefits, when there are any, being those of national consolidation and union which it may help to gain and maintain; in itself it is like an intervening delirium or convulsion which has its hour and passes—an extravaganza of imagination apart from the normal line of development of the race. To admit the validity of its methods of ecstatic revelation side by side with the positive method of knowledge proper to the natural understanding is to divide the mental being in two and so to render real unity of thought and feeling impossible; it is to do the utmost possible by art to manufacture the inconsistent being which the ill-compacted issue of faulty lineage is by nature. Any one who wished to breed a unity-lacking nature in his progeny, predisposed to break down into some form of madness or badness, could scarce do better that assiduously cultivate in himself the two incompatible methods, so sincerely indeed as never to suspect what a fatuous contradiction in being he was actually. Let him then in further process bring to the formation of his mental texture self-deception and hypocrisy, in their ascending degrees from least conscious to most conscious, and final self-gratulation on the success of his special discipline, and he may expect to fashion a mental organization which will discharge in function and transmit in generation what is implicit in structure.

SECTION VII.

THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS.

IF a knowledge of nature by the method of observation and reflection be irreconcilably opposed to, and vitally incompatible with, any knowledge of it or of a supernature by a method of pure internal intuition—the two methods by their principles doomed to a truceless conflict—it is not the less true that the latter method may claim the countenance and aid of metaphysics. The metaphysical method rests on much the same footing as the method of theological intuition —namely, the intending of the mind not to things but to nothings. Shutting his eyes and closing his ears to what is outside him, suspending, in fact, the functions of sense and of reflection on that which the senses supply, his mind withdrawn from all outward distractions into a pure internal contemplation of itself and its forms of activity, the supreme metaphysician, like the theologian, goes far finally to achieve a process of self-magnetization—a self-absorption detached from things of sense—which is the counterpart of the theological ecstasy; and in that detached state of sublimed thought, out of which substance has been volatilized, he has access to the inmost and highest secrets of being—is at home with supreme substance, the thing in itself, the absolute ego, free-will, intuitions of pure reason, infinite space and time, infinite perfection, the identification of opposites, and like supersensual strains of formless thought.*

If these states are truly revelations of supreme truths, then

* How can absolute knowledge in a relative being be knowledge at all? Is not the supposed absoluteness of thought or feeling the surest proof of its individuality—its separateness, that is, from the whole—and therefore of its defect or falsity?

the mental weaklings who cannot perform them, and perceive not their transcendent value, are beings of inferior mental endowment who merit the sort of pity bestowed on the blind man by those who have the use of their eyes; but if, on the other hand, they are the objectivations of straining ineptitudes, subjective duperies only, then he who performs them may be likened to one who, having thrown his muscles into a cataleptic rigidity, and thus divested their movements of all form and purpose *quoad* natural function, feels the formless activity achieved, unlike as it is to all his ordinary experience, to be supernatural and divine.*

The induction of such a metaphysical strain of thought is naturally the more successful the more free the mind is from the consolidating acquisitions of positive knowledge of nature and practical experience of men and things, and the more it has accustomed itself by practice to the stimulation of self-absorbing ecstasies of substance-lacking thought. Theology and metaphysics are instinctive allies, and may still count upon one another for mutual aid and comfort in offensive and defensive alliance. Unhappily, their long union has been a union of fruitless embraces.

It was Coleridge who, after imbuing his large and largely absorbent mind with German metaphysical philosophy, did most in this country to cement the alliance and thought to draw the largest consequences from it; basing big-looming schemes of a mighty constructive philosophy upon what he alleged to be the essential and profoundly significant distinction between *reason* and *understanding*. Nothing more came of the momentous distinction in his case than the repeated enforcement of its vast importance and nebulous intimations of the magnificent consequences which were to follow the union of philosophy and theology in the lofty realms of pure reason. Those who, treading in his footsteps, have since

* In conformity with man's wonted habit of regarding abnormal and mysterious phenomena as effects of supernatural causes—*e.g.*, epilepsy, which appals him by its terrible convulsions, as due to the entrance of a spirit; madness, which sinks him below the level of beasts, as the channel of direct communication with the Deity; earthquakes, comets, and other disorders of nature, which terrify him out of his senses, as produced by special supernatural interventions.

laboured to set forth more definitely the fruits of the happy marriage have not hitherto furnished an edifying system; they have presented rather to the world the spectacle of earnest persons in great throes of labour to bring forth what they have not maturely conceived.

Now, it is certain that a great idealism of any sort, like any theory not entirely baseless, may always find points of support in the multitudinous analogies afforded by the changing aspects and various facets of nature, and that whoever goes to work to build it up synthetically by diligently seeking assimilable relations in every quarter, and wittingly or unwittingly turning away from every fact which conflicts with or contradicts its principle and cannot be used to help its growth, may succeed in building a very imposing edifice. All the more so when he entangles himself and his followers in ill-defined and equivocal phraseology. Any number of pretentious philosophical structures may be raised in that way; and to the greater height the greater the ingenuity and industry of their architects in seeking the material which they want, and in rejecting that which they want not, for their building purposes. But the way is not the way of true knowledge, and the structures so built are artificial and frail in the end; like the sand-castles children rear on the seashore, they are structures of a season which demand not to be taken too seriously. Any one who, heeding not the prohibitive outcry of their supporters, insists on making a real test of their validity by the practical rules of the understanding is pretty sure to be denounced shrilly by them as a rude fellow, without faculty of spiritual or philosophical insight, of hard and contracted understanding, sunk in the gross materialism of mere sense-knowledge. Out upon the brutality which bursts the pleasing bubbles, bright and iridescent, of high-reaching imagination!

Any system, philosophical or theological, so built up, be it never so lofty and imposing, is no better than the meanest theory framed on a similar system—it is essentially a structure apart from the living body of true knowledge, not an organic part of it. Neither goodness of intention, nor grandeur of design, nor ingenuity of construction, nor devotion of disciples, can save it

from the necessity of strict verification by observation and induction, nor make up for what it lacks if it fails to stand that test. Vanity of vanities is the ideal which is not an idealization of the real. The dispassionate Christian may face the certainty that his creed will some day die as a superstition and take its place in history as a past phase of human credulity, unless it proves its fitness for all mankind as an ideal to be pursued sincerely in practice; not its fitness for a select minority only who profess it, but also for the large majority who reject it. For no theory of religion can be true which, taking no account of the myriads who lived and died before its late birth, continues to be a saving grace to a select portion only of the human race, who for the most part hourly deny in deed what they piously profess in creed.

Not by standing out of nature in the ecstasies of rapt and overstrained idealisms of any sort, but by large and close converse with nature and human nature in all their moods, aspects, and relations, is the basis of fruitful ideals and sound mental development laid in every domain of thought. The endeavour to stimulate and strain mental function to an activity beyond the reach and need of a correlate in external nature, and to give it an abstract dignity and arbitrary value, is an endeavour to go contrary to the sober and salutary method by which human development has taken place in the past and takes place now. In the end the speculative philosopher who, lacking the necessary basis of positive experience, thinks out systems of the universe in his closet, is no better employed than the poet of old was when he constructed a variety of ingenious myths to explain the causes of things, or than the theologian is who works himself into artificial states of spiritual transport in relation to unknown inhabitants of infinity and eternity. Theologian and philosopher alike exhibit the strained functions of a sort of *psycholepsy:* the one in the futile folly of striving to discover and expound the *first principles* of things; the other in the equally futile folly of striving to divine and describe the creation of them. Creations and first principles are not things of human concern.

Of every valid human thought and feeling—of all genuine

knowledge—it is true to say that it represents, directly or indirectly, the formation of a complete and fit circuit between the individual and nature; that a mental apprehension means at bottom a corresponding motor apprehension, ideal or real; that the special reaction is as necessary as the special impression to the clearness and definiteness of the conception. There is, therefore, an incompleteness or break of circuit when the mutual adaptation is in default or interrupted, which is probably the condition of the occurrence of consciousness; for it is pretty certain that if the circuit were complete and perfect there would be full unity of man and nature and no consciousness—a return to the naked innocence of Eden.*

What else, then, is transcendent metaphysical thought and feeling but the methodical culture of a break of circuit and the negation of the true method of knowledge? Instead of labouring patiently to effect fit interrelation in every case and to restore the contact when interrupted, the transcendental metaphysician strains earnestly to break circuit by severing himself from the outward fact and relations; aims to make the interruption more and more complete by his convulsive inner straining; does all he can to hinder the restoration of the natural condition. He practises wilfully for himself as a method what prejudice, passion, and temper do unconsciously for one whose perceptions and reflections they hinder and pervert; and he measures the height of his metaphysical faculty by the height of his success in such psycholeptic sleights of thought. The more he succeeds in getting out of touch and

* It is not apparently in assimilation of like, but in discrimination of unlike, that consciousness arises, and it is notably in the complete assimilations signified by formed habits of perception, thought, and action that it almost or quite lapses again. But to get at the real origin and fundamental nature of consciousness it is necessary to go farther back than the individual—to the human experience incorporate in his mental constitution as social being. It is when this incorporate experience of the kind meets with the checks of the individual's experience necessitating fit adjustments on his part—the past human ego of the kind innate in the individual meets with the necessities of the present individual human ego, so to speak—that one might perhaps find the true conditions of the origin of consciousness. Good reasons might be given to show that consciousness is not a result of the experience only of the individual; that it is born of the social nature of man, being the reflection of him in it and of it in him.

grip of nature the less concern are his mental gymnastics to nature, albeit the more pleasing then to himself.

However much he esteem and extol his method and its results—and the delirious sense of freedom and power in the stimulation of function without form and void inevitably leads him to overrate it—his ecstatic achievements of thought and feeling, whether theological or metaphysical, are entirely personal; they have no objective value, no voucher of validity for any other person; there is not the smallest proof that they are of any more worth than the ecstatic, hysteric, cataleptic, and like raptures which they resemble.* The *testimonium spiritus* always attests the particular spirit, wise or fatuous. Looking on man as an organic part of nature, nowise separable from it while he is in it, and growing in faculty only so far as he gains from it—as the nature-made mean by which nature is progressively modified—the just conclusion is that his transcendent exercises of mind are overstrained function gone astray, and that the right method of mental culture is not to foster them artificially, but by good external culture, large and varied, so to nourish, consolidate, and fortify the mind as to render such divulsions of thought impossible. Let him once for all quit the vain quest for absolute truth, of which he is incapable, and be content to use his relative truth, the only truth of which he is capable, for the humble purposes of a gradually progressive development.

It is not likely that he will be content yet to stay in such modest quest of a modest ideal. He will continue to seek in rapturous feeling for proof of inspiration transcending reason and to translate the transcendental rapture into forms of thought that stultify reason. If there are multitudes of men, learned and unlearned, who feel not and cannot feel the transport, they are to be pitied for their bereavement, for they may be likened to one who is colour-blind, or to one who lacks

* One may call to mind that Newman's ecstatic rapture concerning the divine joys and truths of music (p. 29)—which appeal no doubt to the approving sympathies of many minds—is matched by an equal lyrical rapture (p. 264) with regard to the Church of Rome, which the same minds may think mere emotional incontinence gone astray. That shows how dangerous it is to translate personal feelings into thoughts and to base a structure of theological dogma on them.

all ear for music; if some of those who feel it not naturally can generate it artificially by the use of suitable drugs, it is proof of that benevolent wisdom in nature whereby the mutual sympathies of mind and drug have been providentially fore-ordained; if the way of attaining to it by training is the way nervous disorder lies and its full success a kind of mental convulsion, that is not a circumstance which spoils its merit, since it is possible that there is an apocalyptic strain of more than mortal quality, a something divine, in the delirium of mania; if it is the stultification and abnegation of reason that also is as it should be, since the highest use of reason—a mortal faculty bestowed on man for his material and temporal needs on earth—is to learn its own impotence in regard to things spiritual and eternal. Still the wonder must be why the faculty on which he depends to teach him how to live in the world should have nothing to do with teaching him how to go well out of it; and still the pity be that he must depend on reason to demonstrate its own impotence.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE foregoing facts and arguments, if soundly based and sound in themselves, prove that malobservation and misinterpretation of nature have been the unsound foundations of theories of the supernatural; that its phenomena have not ever been, nor are ever now, events of the external world, but have always been, and are, fables of the imagination; that the concern and interest of them are purely psychological—mankind in respect of them having been like one floating down a stream, who imagines his motion to be movement of the unmoving land. Lacking, therefore, solid support in right observation and reasoning, they survive in modern thought only by virtue of their pretensions to a supernatural authority above all observation and reasoning.

By bringing the phenomena within the compass of scientific investigation and setting forth the modes of their natural origin and growth, the need and credit of a supernatural origin are invalidated, at the same time that the obligations of scientific method are fulfilled. If it ever come to pass in the latter days that a Spirit is poured out on all flesh, so that sons and daughters, servants and handmaidens prophesy, and young men see visions and old men dream dreams, one may expect that the strange events will be considered, not as evidences of supernatural influx, but as phenomena belonging to the domain of medical psychology.

Notwithstanding the long history, wide range, and large influence of supernatural beliefs in human thought, it is no more difficult to conceive their ceasing to be than to conceive their coming to be. The one may well happen just as necessarily as there is every reason to believe that the other happened: to die is as natural to a superstition as to be born. It is an old dispute most hotly waged by people who never

define to themselves or to others what they mean by religion, whether there is now, or ever was, a savage nation devoid of some glimmering notions of religion; by which is meant apparently some notion of spiritual beings, fine or coarse in quality, and of the continuance of the individual in the form —if form it has any—of a spirit after the death of his body. The evidence of travellers is uncertain, some of them declaring positively that they have met with savages without the least trace of such beliefs, while others, claiming to have better insight into savage thoughts and feelings, perhaps reading their own thoughts and feelings into them, believe they discover everywhere positive evidence of the existence of the beliefs.*

The dispute in the end is not of weighty moment; for if the theory of evolution be true, as persons of all creeds are gradually inclining their hearts and minds to admit, there must have been a point somewhere in the becoming of man when the divine spirit was breathed into him and he became a living soul capable of supernatural beliefs and immortal longings. That admission suits ill with the notion of their universality. Moreover, those who, ignoring this great difficulty in the way, claim their universality in proof of the truth of spiritual things, ought to reflect: first, that savages have the most plentiful supply of spiritual existences, since they ascribe spirits, not to men and women only, but to horses and other animals, and even to bows and arrows, axes, knives, and other implements of warfare and utensils of domestic use which they bury with their dead, in order that these may have the use of the spirit-forms of them in the spiritual world;† secondly, that it has

* So far as it goes the evidence appears to prove that many savages have vague notions of ghosts and spirits, but that some few low savages are destitute of any notions of the kind. The supernatural notions entertained are of all degrees of crudity, and almost as various as the peoples. One might say of them as Jeremiah exclaimed to the idolatrous Jews, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." (Jer. ii. 28.)

† The savage, in fact, assigns its special spirit to each material thing, and regards spirit as a sort of finely attenuated matter. Like the Christian, in another sphere of thought, he imagines a mystical body. The Indian of Guiana, for example, believes that every material object has its spirit, and that the spirits of things and persons can leave them at will to do just what they could do when united to their bodies. He is convinced that everything which he sees and

been an undeniable result of the progress of human culture through the ages to lessen the number and range of spiritual existences, as well as to refine the character of them; all inanimate and most animate objects having been by degrees robbed of their spiritual nature, and the pale, dim, ethereal shade or ghost-like phantom of the bodily form lingering and pining around the scenes of its life in the body—which is the savage's crude notion of a spirit—having been raised by sublimation to the spiritual height and refinement of an immaterial and invisible metaphysical entity, the formless inhabitant of infinity and eternity.*

If a conclusion may fitly be drawn from a comparison of the religious notions of savages with those of civilized races —really alike only in being called by a common name—it is the conclusion that a process of thinning and refinement which has gone on so steadily with the development of the human mind will continue to go on until spirits are squeezed and refined out of existence.

Is that the fate to come of the last surviving supernatural beliefs in civilized countries—to wit, the belief of a supernatural Being, omniscient and omnipotent, who in the beginning created the earth for man's uses, and has ever since watched and ruled over his affairs, and the belief of an eternal life for him in heaven when his brief life on earth is ended? What are these beliefs but instinctive protests against the miseries and injustices of this life? Notions of compensatory recompense which beguile men to bear its burdens and

suffers in dreams is real, his detached spirit actually doing and undergoing what he dreams, and will take vengeance on any one by whom he dreams that he has been injured. As a consequence, he holds that some persons can send out their spirits at will and do great harm to any one whom they wish to injure—administer poison, inflict pain, produce disease, cause death. Natural disease being inconceivable to him, he cannot understand how any one should die unless he were injured by the spirit sent forth by one of these persons whom he calls a "kenaima." To protect himself from this mysterious agency of evil he has recourse to the medicine-man, or peaiman, who keeps off the kenaima by his ceremonials, and drives them away when they have entered his body and caused sickness.—*Among the Indians in Guiana*, by EVERARD IM THURN.

* The belated ghost, dispossessed of its tenement; the ethereal spirit dwelling somewhere in the ether; the good soul in Heaven and the bad soul in Hell; the eternal something in man which continues somehow somewhere;—such the progress of spiritual abstraction and refinement of thought.

confront its trials with resignation and comfortable hope, since they imply that the misery and injustice are apparent only, the wise ordinances of the Unsearchable whose ways are past finding out, and that in a life to come what is dark will be made light, what is wrong be made right, what is sad be made glad.

Both beliefs are instinct with egoism: they are its supreme expression. It does not on that account follow that they are fictitious. Humanity did not create itself, and is not responsible for the protestation which its conscience makes against the cruel order of the natural world. Whence, then, this obstinate adherence to the notion of justice and recompense? Why does man earnestly revolt against the natural order of which he is a natural product? How is it that the immoral order of nature breeds naturally this moral censure of itself? Whence comes it to him to feel the first dawn of this long-delayed conscience in nature? Every new start of organic development is, so to speak, the outcome of an unrest and the expression of an aspiration. Is the aspiration after a more perfect state of being the pledge that a more perfect state will be on earth or in heaven? the belief in morality the postulate of immortality, or of a better mortality only? Is man himself end and aim? If nature is made better by his means it is still nature which makes the means, and the better which he makes or imagines is still nature. Reflecting on these obscure questions, it is easy to understand how it was that he had recourse to supernatural explanations; reflecting on the explanations, it is not easy to understand that they explain anything. They do little more than state the incomprehensible in terms of a language without meaning. Certain it is that the existence of such notions is proof of their past necessity; and the necessity proof again how poor a thing life on earth is felt to be without the hope of its continuance in a better world to come.

Before men conclude their feelings of revolt against the injustice of the order of nature to spring from the profound instinct of the divine in the human heart, and base on them the tremendous superstructure of future compensation throughout eternity, they ought, perhaps, to ask themselves soberly whether

the recompense would be just, whether in truth it would not be disproportionate and unjust.

In the first place, the recompense sought is out of all proportion to the suffering undergone or the merit shown, since it is a claim to eternity in compensation for a moment; in the second place, the compensation ought rightly to include other living creatures besides man, since it would not be just that they, unlike him, should be nowise indemnified for their great and grievous sufferings in this world, the worst of which, perhaps, are inflicted upon them by him advisedly for his uses or wantonly for his pleasures. Is it just that he, the great oppressor, shall be recompensed, and that they, the helpless victims who have never sinned by eating forbidden food, shall have no compensation?*

That man takes no serious thought of this injustice, or thinks the injustice fully justified by his pre-eminence because dominion has been divinely given to him over every living thing, proves how much he is thinking of himself only in the matter; how entirely his notions of his own special destiny are inspired by an exacting and exclusive egoism. That being so, it is quite possible that his protest against the order of nature in his case is the wail of egoism using all it can for its profit, and rebelling against the subordination of itself to the whole which in the end uses it for its profit; exacting an order of things in conformity with its pretensions as the aim and end of things created; postulating an immortal satisfaction of its delirious desires; and that supernatural aspirations will die out when, by attaining to a true knowledge of his own nature and its relations, man ceases to distinguish himself absolutely from the rest of nature and gains a true sense of proportion. As a just sense of proportion is a saving grace to the individual, so it may be also to the race. It weakens not, strengthens rather, this theory that those who are loudest in their wailing outcries against the order of natural things, and in passionate demands for a compensating supernatural order, are just those who by

* No doubt the animal feels sure that the world was made for it, and, being happily unburdened with reason, does not divine that it has been made to be butchered for man's benefit—to yield him sport, food, and clothing.

temperament and training are most susceptible to intense vibrations of self and least capable of quiet subordination of self to the whole. They are the people who account their weakness the mark of a superiority of nature and nurse it systematically as a channel of supernatural illumination.

If all visions, intuitions, and other modes of communion with the supernatural, alleged or accepted now or at any time, have been no more than phenomena of psychology—instances, that is, of subnormal, supranormal, or abnormal mental function—and if all present supernatural beliefs are survivals of a state of thought befitting lower stages of human development, it is reasonable to think that the continuance of such beliefs cannot be helpful, must be hurtful, to human progress. The least evil of them is that they are vain diversions and dispersions of thought and feeling whereby these are in large measure turned to waste—the energies of men distracted from the right way of true gain to themselves and of practical service to one another and dissipated in unfruitful aspirations and works. The enthusiastic optimist who, recoiling from the painful sense of the long train of evil which has been and is in the world, plunges into the blessed hope of a future of ever-perfecting goodness and happiness may foresee incalculable gains to mankind from the systematic utilization of all his powers after a right method; not only in increased knowledge of nature and in the practical uses and comforts of life resulting therefrom, but in a complete knowledge of the constitution of concrete human nature, of the laws of its hereditary production, of its natural growths in relation to its surroundings, and of the causes of its development and degeneration in families; and in the systematic application of such knowledge—not ever yet seriously attempted—to promote health and wealth of mind.* Men will never realize to what height of power and happiness in the world they can grow, nor their responsibility for their growth, until they realize that they come into being by natural laws and by no other laws; that they feel and think and act always in virtue

* They may think, as De Mettrie said, that materialism is the antidote of misanthropy. Was it not Descartes who said that if mankind is to be perfected the means of perfecting it must be sought in the medical sciences?

of natural laws and of no other laws; that in success and in failure, in health and in sickness, in folly and in wisdom, in life and in death, they are subject to natural laws and to no other laws.*

In order that such devout aspirations of the scientific optimist may be realized—no less fond fancies perhaps than those of the religious optimist which he despises—it will be necessary for him to persuade men to look directly and sincerely at facts and to adjust themselves fitly to them. Knowing and feeling their responsibilities under a reign of natural law, they will give over futile wails and prayers to invisible powers and join hands heartily in social co-operation to fulfil the duties and responsibilities which they frankly feel and face, acknowledging to themselves simply, however sadly, that they have to work out their own destiny, not with fear and trembling in abject abasement, but with open-eyed sincerity, quiet fortitude, mutual help, and stoical resignation to the inevitable. The problem is neither one of wailing pessimism nor of exulting optimism, which are simply subjective states of the individual mattering no more to the universe than the multitudinous shrieks of animal suffering which hourly ascend to a deaf heaven; it is a problem of stoical acceptance of facts and of resignation to their inexorable sway. The emotion and energy hitherto wasted on the supernatural will then do their natural work to kindle a glowing feeling of human brotherhood and to promote its weal. The passionate altruistic feeling of woman, no more

* It was Christian teaching which developed the distinction of vices from faults (the Latin *vitia* having had no such meaning); by regarding them as offences against a supernatural Being which entailed corresponding punishments, they were deemed *wicked* and called *sins*. An immense consequence has been that the punishment of vices in this world, just as follies are punished, by the unfailing operations of natural law, has been overlooked, and the just sense of practical responsibility weakened or extinguished in many minds. If everybody sincerely saw and felt that vices are only follies or faults writ in red ink, so to speak, and inevitably punished in their consequences to self or others, he might feel as much ashamed of them, and be as anxious to avoid them, as if they were faults or follies. After all, those who have done the best work of the world have been practically necessitarians or fatalists, not dreamers of free will. To say nothing of individuals, were not the Stoics, who denied free will, heroes? The Epicureans, who asserted it, sensualists? Did not Calvinists establish freedom of conscience, the Jesuits destroy it?

spent in abortive aims and work under the guidance of ministers of the supernatural, may bring much useful help to the work of social development, when it is applied rationally, in accordance with knowledge, by social means to social ends. So far from religion dying when theology dies, it may then for the first time flourish freely.

A vital realization of the conception and feeling of human solidarity certainly cannot take place until mankind, thus realizing fully its social responsibilities, no longer evades them by flights into unreal regions of aspiration and fancy, but learns to deal sincerely and practically with them. How can it ever take place at all so long as hostile sections are occupied in trying to force their favourite superstitions on one another, and in quarrels about differences which, could they ever be decided or however they were decided, would not benefit a single mortal? The known effects of social unions of men to breed and inflame a common emotion justify the expectation that out of human solidarity will be evolved a heat of enthusiasm that will make the feeling for others a more intimate part of the individual's nature, a far less alien feeling than it has ever been yet, and make universal that which at its best hitherto has only been sectional.* Its aim should be, and its effect may be, to weld the feeling for self and the feeling for others into one feeling, as it is now in the parent's love of child, so that altruism becomes the highest gratification of self and egoism the best service to others: to make society

* Of the high state of inflammation to which a common emotion in relation to preposterous tenets of faith might be raised some most striking examples were afforded by the various extraordinarily fanatical sects which prevailed during the early struggles of Christianity, notably by the Montanists, of whom Renan writes: "Le vrai chrétien, ne vivant qu'en perspective du jugement dernier et du martyre, passe sa vie dans la contemplation. Non seulement il ne doit pas fuir la persécution, mais il lui est ordonné de la rechercher. On se prépare sans cesse au martyre comme à un complément nécessaire de la vie chrétienne. La fin naturelle du chrétien, c'est de mourir dans les tortures. Une crédulité effrénée, une foi à toute épreuve dans les charismes spirites, achevaient de faire du montanisme un des types de fanatisme le plus outrés que mentionne l'histoire de l'humanite." Again, "La recherche du martyre devient une fièvre impossible à dominer. Les circoncellions, courant le pays par troupes folles pour chercher la mort, forçant les gens à les martyriser, traduisirent en actes épidémiques ces accès de sombre hystérie."—*Marc-Aurèle et la Fin du Monde Antique.*

such a harmony of parts as a great musical performance by a large orchestra, where the nicest adaptation of parts in the most complex co-ordinations and subordinations of them work in unison to the accomplishment of a harmonic whole; where undue self-assertion or any similar expression of egoism would be a hideous discord marring the harmony and making the individual odious—where the fullest altruism is the best-attuned egoism. Man's inhumanity to man, which has made his past history on earth a tale of horror and woe, might be extinguished by such an evolution of the living sentiment of human solidarity, since it could not consist with it: humanity as a name for the highest qualities of mankind be synonymous with humanity as a name for the kind.

It is an unreasoning fear that probity, love of truth, devotion, charity, self-sacrifice, and other human virtues will die out of human life when they lose their supernatural sanction, as some persons seem gloomily pleased to predict. In the human progress on earth theocratic governments which drew their authority from supernatural sources have been supplanted by governments based upon strictly civil conceptions of society, in which the necessary obligations and restraints are derived from within itself; and this without men being less good citizens in consequence. For nearly two thousand years have the moral principles of Christianity failed to make men follow them in practice, notwithstanding the tremendous arguments of Heaven and Hell; yet now for the first time is the force being engendered naturally within the social organism to make practical application of them. Whence in time past were drawn the inspirations of sublime deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice for the country? From no supernatural source. It was as a simple act of pagan devotion to country or kind, and oftentimes in the quiet certitude that the sacrifice was the end of all, that the supreme sacrifice was made by patriot or by hero. Not such examples of pagan devotion in the past only, but the striking spectacles of self-sacrificing devotion presented by some of the despised Communists and Nihilists at the present day, give us the right to expect that mankind, so long as the energy of its

evolution is not spent, will find within itself, without supernatural help, the ideals and the enthusiasm necessary to continue and perfect its development.

It is most certain that the one enthusiasm which burns in some breasts to the glow of the purest self-sacrifice now, and promises to burn more hotly in the future, is the enthusiasm of humanity. It is humanity, or that portion of it from which he has sprung and in which he lives and moves and has his being, that is the inspiration and the guide and the providence of the individual: he feels, thinks, and acts as it moves, teaches, and directs him; and he rejoices, therefore, with a martyr's joy or a hero's pride in its applauding acclamation of sentiments and deeds which mark his devotion to it. His fanatical joy is none the less because, from a standpoint outside it, such heroic deeds may be of no more moment than the devoted zeal and self-sacrifice of a toiling ant in the busy service of its colony; nor is it dimmed by the suspicion which intruding reflection might suggest, that in the grim irony of fate the accomplishment of disillusion shall be the close of development and the beginning of decline.*

If supernatural beliefs are grounded in the weaknesses and errors of human nature, it is not intellectual and moral waste only that reason will tax them with; it may accuse them also of direct moral mischief. They act perniciously to split the unity of the individual nature and thus destroy its fundamental concord and veracity. How can he who is thus severed in two see facts truly as they are, see himself in true relations to them, see them as a whole? A sincere unity of moral and intellectual being is impossible to him. The result at best is a failure to go so far forward in

* Amiel, a sufficiently spiritual being, discovered this, or something like it, to be true of the individual. "La désillusion complète serait l'immobilité absolue. Celui qui a déchiffré le secret de la vie finie, qui en a lu le mot, est sorti du monde des vivants, il est mort de fait." Again, "Le sentiment de l'infini épouvante, trouble, pétrifie. L'abîme insondable est partout, puits béant derrière chaque chose dont nous perçons la surface. Pour vivre, il faut voiler l'abîme, accepter de convention une surface et une forme quelconque, se tailler une maison dans l'immense univers. Pour connaître il faut savoir ignorer, savoir affirmer," etc.—*Fragments d'un Journal Intime.*

intellectual and moral growth as he might go were he to start from the basis of a central unity of being; at the worst its consequences involve an actual hypocrisy of nature, conscious or unconscious, and all the moral and intellectual evils that flow directly, naturally, and inevitably from such discord of being. Are not these written in the sad story of mankind on earth from its beginning unto now?

The history of supernaturalism in human belief, like the history of the individual, is its character. It is a history which, read with candour, is a condemnation; for it is for the most part a tragical story of the continued doings of the worst things, notwithstanding wasted aspirations to, and professions of, the best things. Were it not for the persistence of the ideal in the human heart, and for the redeeming instances of the few noble lives which it inspires and sacrifices, the faithful study of human history might well demoralize human nature. Think of the unspeakable horror and scorn, the despair and contempt, which an immortal doomed to live through all the ages of human being and doing could not fail to feel. The brief sojourner of a lifetime who makes a faithful study of the history of his kind must rise from it imbued with the reflection that, whatever man has been, it would have been something better not to have been; with the conviction that, whatever he may be destined to become at his best, it were something better not to be at the cost of what he has been, is still, and must continue to be in the long and painful travail of becoming it; and with the final certitude that, like everything organic, the human race carries the seeds and causes of inevitable dissolution within itself, and must, when the appointed time comes, cumber the earth no longer.

The youngest theology, now fast fading formlessly, incarnated the principle or spirit of evil in the personality of Satan, whose enmity to the impersonation of the spirit of good it accused as the stupendous cause of all human woes. Its imagination, now, alas! sadly undermined by the steady dissolution of its creeds, cannot create as it did when in its prime; else it might take a long flight forward into the far future and in prophetic

vision behold a strange sight—might see perhaps Satan, not as once,

> "Coasting the wall of Heaven, on this side night,
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . with wearied wings
> On the bare outside of this world";

still less

> "Squat like a toad, close to the ear of Eve";

but soaring with easy wing and exultant contemplation over the ruins of a dead world and of

> "His darling sons, who,
> Hurled headlong to partake with us, shall curse
> Their frail original, and faded bliss,
> Faded so soon?" *

* MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*.

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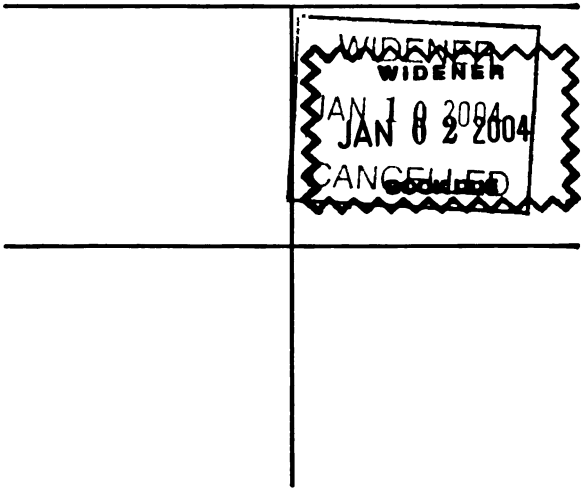

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